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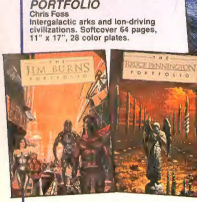

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COMICS SCENE RETURNS around yuletide when it's **Titans** time for **Marv Wolfman**. Look for him, **Beauty & the Beast** and **The Family Dog** in **COMICS SCENE #24, on sale December 12, 1991.**

WORD BALLOONS

Bronze Dreams

The books may stop. The comic may be cancelled. But somewhere, the adventures of our heroes continue—if only in our dreams.

Doc Savage has always been one of my favorites. A mixed "success" in comics, he's returning for Millennium (page 13). And Doc's still in paperback action, too—thank to COMICS SCENE's Will Murray, the new "Kenneth Robeson," a pseudonym worn for so long by the primary *Savage* author/creator, the late Lester Dent.

And why? "The main reason I was chosen," Murray says, "is because in 1980, I had the foresight to write a Doc Savage novel. I had just agented Lester Dent's unpublished Savage novel, *The Red Spider* [issued in 1979 by Bantam Books, Savage's paperback publisher since 1964, as volume #95]. That same year, I discovered Dent's only complete, unused Savage plot outline, *Python Isle*. I really regretted that Dent had never written the book. So, I rather boldly suggested *I* write it."

Murray turned in a novel that Bantam liked but still shelved. Instead, Bantam fulfilled a commitment to fans, reprinting all remaining original *Savage* magazine yarns in paperback. It took 10 years.

In 1990, with the reprints winding down, Bantam editors pondered Doc Savage's future—and they looked to the past. So, they published the first all-new Doc Savage novel in 40 years, *Escape from Loki*—written by one of my favorite writers ever, Hugo-winner Philip José Farmer, biographer of *Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life*. This fabulous adventure (out in August) chronicles how a very young Doc Savage met his five aides during WWI.

Then, Bantam decided to publish *Python Isle* (this month), commissioning Will Murray—who advised on Doc reprint selection and now writes the Destroyer paperbacks—to do a series of new Doc novels. All are based on materials created by Lester Dent.

"*Python Isle* is a '30s story in the classic mold," Murray explains. "This was a complete Dent outline rejected by *Doc Savage* magazine editor John Nanovic because of negative reader reaction to stories involving snakes. It's a high adventure in which Doc searches for a legendary island.

"*White Eyes*, out in March, combines the false start to *The Crime Annihilator* [Bantam's #31, *The Annihilist*] with discarded chapters of *The Vanisher* [#52]. I became a Dr. Frankenstein and stitched together this underworld crime story. The villain, White Eyes, strikes his enemies dead with a glance. When their bodies are found, their eyes are like ivory."

The Frightened Fish is based on a plot Dent was preparing when Street & Smith cancelled *Doc Savage* in 1949. A sequel to *The Red Spider*, it's set in occupied Japan. "*Frightened Fish* resurrects a villain that Dent *was* planning to bring back," Murray reveals, "and it's *not* John Sunlight."

In *The Jade Ogre* (late '92), while seeking a woman missing in 1935 Cambodia, Doc encounters a legion of disembodied arms.

Flight into Fear is "an intense Cold War story with Doc sentenced to death by the Kremlin because he exposed the Russian atomic bomb program in *The Red Spider*," Murray says. This may be the most pure Dent story of all. "It's based on a complete novel Dent did on spec for Fawcett Gold Medal paperbacks in 1952. He hated rewriting, refused Fawcett's request for revisions and just put it aside. My turning it into a Doc novel worked extremely well; the end result is as much as 75% Dent."

The Whistling Wraith offers a delicious mystery: A white-bearded man dressed in kingly robes who walks through walls. This yarn focuses on Doc's efforts to locate a Balkan king who disappeared from a White House motorcade. It's followed by a lost race story, *The Forgotten Realm*.

Both Murray and Farmer may write further Docs. Notes Murray, "The last surviving *Savage* ghost writer, Ryerson Johnson, said, '*Python Isle* reads like Dent at his best.' And that's my goal—to write a Doc Savage that if you didn't already know, you would think *was* written in the '30s."

For Will Murray and those of us who love Doc Savage, the dreams continue. "I discovered Doc in January 1969 with Bantam's *Dust of Death* [#32], and I thought 'Kenneth Robeson' was the greatest writer on Earth. Some 20 years later, I've *become* Kenneth Robeson.

"I can't say it's a dream come true because I never dreamt there would be a need for more Doc Savage beyond those original 182 novels," Will Murray says. "But I'm thrilled to carry on the tradition of great adventure."

—David McDonnell/Editor

LETTERING

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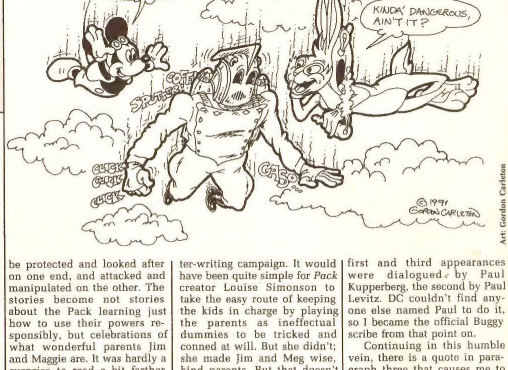

Art: Gordon Carleton

...As a *Power Pack* fan who mourned the team's public humiliation and destruction in their defunct comic, I was looking forward to this TV pilot and hoping it would turn into a series. Then, I read your article in issue #20. Oboy.

Don't get me wrong. It's *much* better than the last days of the book and it's not a *complete* embarrassment. I'm still rooting for them. But the whole thing's just put together entirely wrong.

The producers apparently regard *Power Pack*, and kids in general, in rather the same way women were regarded in the Victorian era—as spiritually pure, but ultimately dimwitted, creatures unable to cope with the world. The most immediate indication they're not on the kids' side is the business with telling the Power parents the secret. It's not as crippling here as in the book—they've apparently adopted the "Rose Tint My World" approach to the stories, where the world the kids live in is carefully child-proofed so there's no way the Pack could get hurt—but it removes control from the Pack. With the Power parents in the dark, the kids can make their own decisions about their powers, fight their own battles, make their own rules, do things their own way, think for themselves, and essentially be the heroes and central characters. That's as it should be. The show *is*, after all, supposed to be about *them*.

With the Power parents in the know, the kids lose their autonomy. They don't make their own decisions; the parents are in charge and set the rules. The kids are the weakest and most ineffectual people on their own show. Instead of being heroes, they're victims to be protected and looked after on one end, and attacked and manipulated on the other. The stories become not stories about the Pack learning just how to use their powers responsibly, but celebrations of what wonderful parents Jim and Maggie are. It was hardly a surprise to read a bit farther down the line that Richard Borchiver, the producer, is a new parent; on the average, these do tend to be the people who want to put Alex, Julie, Jack and Katie in their place and make the Power parents the show's stars. But it puts the focus on the *wrong* characters.

Then, we go on to find a story where the bad guy's not *really* bad, just misunderstood. Guys, kids *hate* this trick. If the bad guy's not bad, then the hero's victory doesn't really count for much. And, of course, Papa Power delivers the moral because the kids are too boneheaded to figure it out. There is a determined effort to set the kids up as icons of innocence and purity. This is what they think will appeal to the under-18 crowd? It's condescending and obnoxious.

I would suggest Borchiver go back and read the old *Power Pack* stories. He will discover, if he's paying attention, that the kids' secret was in no danger of overwhelming the book. It became a big issue primarily because of an ill-conceived letter-writing campaign. It would have been quite simple for *Pack* creator Louise Simonson to take the easy route of keeping the kids in charge by playing the parents as ineffectual dummies to be tricked and conned at will. But she didn't; she made Jim and Meg wise, kind parents. But that doesn't mean they should be in the center of everything. They don't belong there. The stories aren't about them.

Power Pack was created as a story about and for kids that didn't insult parents. It's a shame to see it turned into a story about and for parents that insults kids.

Michael Pickens
122 E. Channel Street
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...Thank you for running the *Ragman* feature in COMICS SCENE #21. Traci Johns did a splendid job, despite a tight deadline. Still, I do have a few corrections to make. In the second paragraph, the credits for the series read "writer Robert Loren Fleming and artist Pat Broderick (assisted by Keith Giffen)." While Keith is properly credited later in the article, I must emphasize that Pat and I worked from Keith's plots and breakdowns, so his name should *always* precede ours. I'm also wrongly credited with creating Ambush Bug. Again, it was Keith. The Bug's first and third appearances were dialogued by Paul Kupperberg, the second by Paul Levitz. DC couldn't find anyone else named Paul to do it, so I became the official Buggy scribe from that point on.

Continuing in this humble vein, there is a quote in paragraph three that causes me to cringe. "We've done more with Ragman than has ever been done," says I. *Brrr!* What I was talking about here was *page count*. I meant to observe that the character's continuing popularity is based on an extremely limited number of appearances, which is a testament to the talents of Robert Kanigher and Joe Kubert. They created something lasting, while our efforts have yet to stand the test of time.

Finally, if I neglected to mention Kevin Dooley the first time around, then I've got to rectify that now. He took over as editor when Andy Helfer was promoted upstairs, and has worked diligently to assure an attractive and error-free Ragman series. You might say he's the thread holding this patchwork project together...

So now that you know who-all to blame, what are you waiting for? Go read the book!
Robert Loren Fleming
New York

...Thank you for your articles on the crossover events in Marvel and DC. It is nice to get

an idea of how much one would have to go out of their way to understand the plot, and whether it's worth it. For example, *The Infinity Gauntlet* takes place mostly in books we don't collect. Besides, what does it really have to offer? An omnipotent character? A shifty Mephisto? Almost every character in the Marvel Universe? The death of half the population of said universe? We've seen *all* that before. Besides, when Marvel organizes a massacre, attack or secret war, characterization is almost always the first (but by no means the last) casualty. DC, however, designs pretty interesting plots, which enhance rather than destroy the series involved. I am very curious as to which character is Monarch.

Please keep up the good work, providing stories about the comic medium and its fruit, from different perspectives and for different audiences.

A. Newell
Address Withheld

...What's wrong with people? Why didn't folks turn out to see the funniest, most enjoyable genre movie of the summer, Disney's *Rocketeer*? Everyone I've talked to who has seen it loved it. So what went wrong? Why did it do so poorly at the box office? Is it because it's a Disney film? Granted, it didn't graphically depict every violent act imaginable, and it had only a smattering of four-letter words, but it was not a kiddie show! It might have been hurt by the Disney label. Maybe it should have been released through Touchstone? Another problem may have been an unknown in the title role. As good as Bill Campbell was, people like a familiar face. The most harm, however, was done by the ultra-hyped *Prince of Thieves* and *Terminator 2*, both of which I did not enjoy quite so much as I did *Rocketeer*. *Thieves* suffered from uneven acting. Kevin Costner was almost laughable in the role (let's keep Errol Flynn alive as Robin Hood forever!). *T2* was all glitz and special FX that got to be almost overwhelming after a while, not as good a film as the first *Terminator*, and not half as good as Arnie's SF outing last year, *Total Recall*.

The Rocketeer was intended as a trilogy. Now, will there be any more? If not, it's a bloody shame.

Julie Cesari
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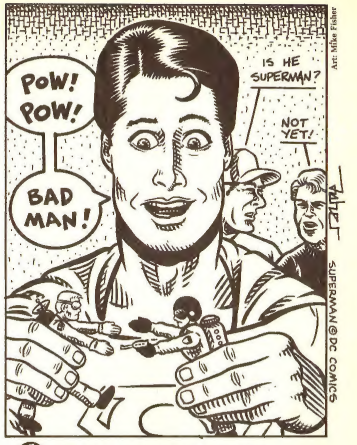
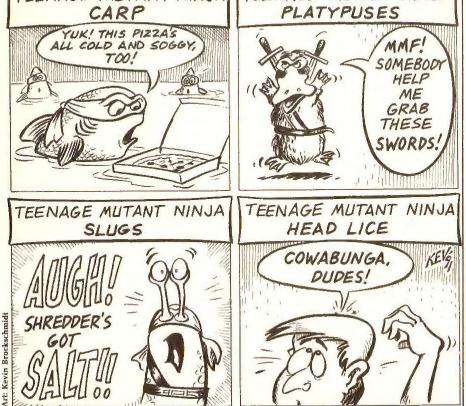


Art: Mike Fisher

EVERYONE WONDERED WHEN SUPERBOY WOULD BECOME SUPERMAN.

EARLY CONCEPTS THAT WEREN'T POPULAR...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TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA PLATYPUSES
MMF! SOMEBODY HELP ME GRAB THESE SWORDS!
TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA SLUGS
AUGH! SHREDDER'S GOT SALT!!
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As the tide flows by, this hero dives into new adventures.

By T.L. JOHNS

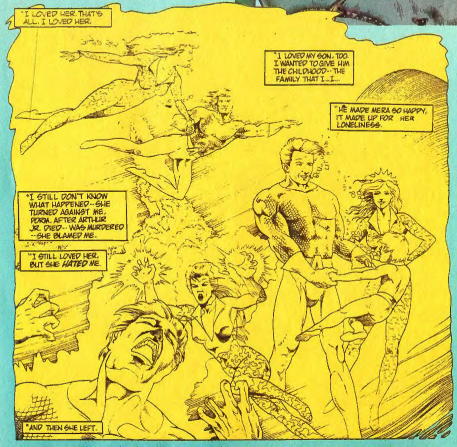
Something fishy, and slightly mammalian, is happening at DC—*Aquaman* is back as a monthly series. Helmed by Shaun McLaughlin, with art by Ken Hooper, this new series is being heralded as "an *Aquaman* for the '90s," and McLaughlin hopes old and new readers will be pleased with their less revisionist approach.

While the current "back to basics" formula involves taking an established character and starting over from scratch, McLaughlin has less lofty plans for the ex-ruler of Atlantis: "It's not all new and all-different—it's the *same* Aquaman everyone remembers," he says. "It's a continuation of the character instead of a revitalization. He's still in the green pants and orange shirt. We're picking it up a couple of years after the last mini-series: His son is dead, his wife has gone mad and left him, and he has left Poseidonis to roam the world. The first story brings him back to Poseidonis."

McLaughlin's own odyssey is almost as wide-ranging. After growing up in Buffalo, NY and Ontario, Canada, he moved to California to get into the movie business as an actor. His next role will be the male lead in *Mars Still Needs Women* (due to be retitled). *Aquaman*, in the meantime, is McLaughlin's first dive into the sea of comics.

"I've worked on some screenplays. I had been an actor and a stuntman for quite some time, but I got out of it because I had an accident, and now I can sit down backwards if I want to," he says, noting that his "serious" writing began while working on a novel. "I've had a couple of plays produced in upstate New York by local companies, but I've always had to keep a day job."

McLaughlin hooked up with DC through *Aquaman* editor Kevin Dooley, whom he worked with as Fantagraphics' PR director while Dooley edited *Amazing Heroes*. And he believes Aquaman still holds a


"I LOVED HER. THAT'S ALL. I LOVED HER.
"I LOVED MY SON, TOO. I WANTED TO GIVE HIM THE CHILDHOOD--THE FAMILY THAT I...
"HE MADE MERA SO HAPPY. IT MADE UP FOR HER LONELINESS.
"I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED--SHE TURNED AGAINST ME. FOUR...AFTER ARTHUR JR. DIED--WAS MURDERED --SHE BLAMES ME.
"I STILL LOVED HER. BUT SHE HATED ME.
"AND THEN SHE LEFT.

Writer Shaun McLaughlin won't be changing the tragic events of Aquaman's past. They still happened.

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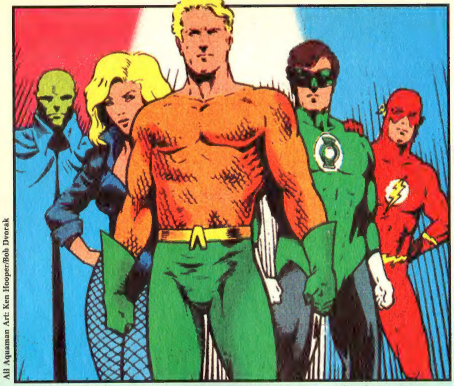


All Aquaman Art: Ken Hooper/Rob Dvorak

Several heroes will surface in *Aquaman* to help firmly position the character within the DC Universe again.

very important place in the DC Universe.

"I think he's an archetypal character. There's a certain duality to his nature. Whereas Superman only has to get up in the morning to be Superman and Batman has the suit, Aquaman is both of these. He gets up in the morning and he's Aquaman; he can live in the sea, he can live on the land. He has both of those natures. There's something inherently interesting in this character. He lives in these two different worlds. He has a civilian identity that he never really uses, and we're going to be addressing that more and more as the series goes on," McLaughlin explains.

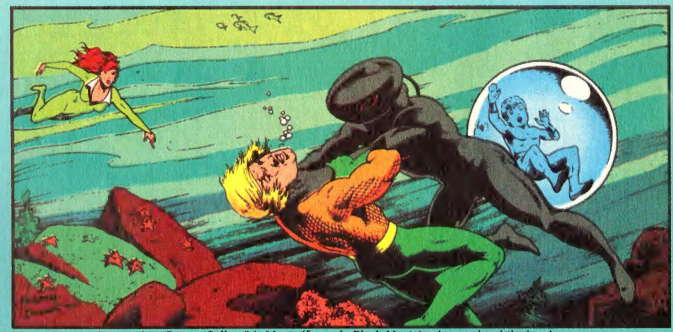
"We're not changing him as much as taking a logical continuation from everything that has been there before. We're delving into his character in this series more than people have previously done. There's no new origin, but issues #12-#15 will be called 'Time and Tide,' and they'll be tying up the continuity of the different origins, because as of right now there are *five* separate origins. There will be an explanation of the one true origin and why there are so many different thoughts about *where* he comes from and who he is.

"When the new series starts, he'll be having some questions about who he is. He has been a workaholic for the last three years, going place to place saving animals and people while never taking the time to find out who he is. Aquaman will realize that he must take that time, that he has to realize who he is," McLaughlin says. "Otherwise, his life is pretty much meaningless."

Few comics series have cut to the heart of environmental issues the way *Swamp Thing*, *Animal Man* and now *Aquaman* have. In these times of strong environmental concerns and "political correctness," McLaughlin promises fans they'll see Aquaman's belief in these concerns.

"We touch upon [environmental subjects] in the early issues," he says. "Around issue #8, you'll see the beginnings of an environmental problem, and then the next issues directly address that. We'll find out just what his stand is on the environment. It's different from what you see in *Swamp Thing* or *Animal Man*."

McLaughlin describes the mind-boggle that accompanies starting a new series about an old character: "You have to remember that this is *entertainment*. I have to remember so many things when I begin a new issue. First of all, this is somebody's first issue of *Aquaman* and they may never have heard of the guy before. Then I think, 'What is the motivating action of the story?' 'What is going on



All Aquaman Color Art Colors: Tom McCraw

Among Aquaman's returning "Rogues Gallery" is Manta (formerly Black Manta), who murdered the hero's son.

inside of Aquaman?' 'How does this relate to the events of all the previous issues?' You add a topic like the environment and you must remember that this is an entertainment form; but when there are things that I really want to say, the only way to do that is to stay with the character and remember how he thinks."

Many current comics emphasize grim reality, presenting their heroes in a dark, violent and depressing milieu. But McLaughlin wants *Aquaman* fans to know that, while the last miniseries ended on a downbeat, Aquaman's life is on an upswing.

"He will start to remember what happened around issue #7, specifically to Mera. We're going to put him in a new position, as a person with real power in the DC Universe—not only physical power, but as someone with strong political clout. He's going to become ambassador *pro tem* to the Security Council. He'll be petitioning the Security Council to allow Poseidonis to be a member of the United Nations," says McLaughlin.

And once again, Aquaman will be swimming alongside some of his old pals, the best of the brave and bold.

"We're definitely working on some team-ups. Superman will be appearing. Issue #2 will be directly related to *Superman* #63, in which Aquaman's antics are being covered by reporter Clark Kent. And there will be a Teen Titans crossover because of the Aqualad connection," McLaughlin explains.

And where would superheroes be without the supervillains?

"Eventually, we'll see all of Aquaman's 'Rogues Gallery,' though they might not be the way they're remembered. Black Manta will appear, although he'll be called just Manta, because it sounds more ominous. Besides, he is a black character and it seems redundant. They called him the Black Manta in the '60s because they really thought that was the name of the *fish*. Properly, it's a Manta Ray, which are pretty harmless characters.

"Also, we'll meet Queequeg the Whaler (with a literary nod going to Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*). He's the most politically-correct villain on the face of the Earth. Queequeg doesn't have both oars in the water and thinks God has appeared to him in the form of an albatross, giving him the mandate that Aquaman isn't doing enough for the environment. Therefore, it's Queequeg's duty to kill Aquaman. Queequeg will appear briefly in issue #4, then return later.

Photo: Courtesy Shaun McLaughlin

McLaughlin finds it "serendipitous" to be writing *Aquaman*. "He was my favorite character when I was a child."

The writer plans to make *Aquaman* "exciting," but doesn't want to do "the standard 'superhero-beats-the-guy-up-every-issue' thing."

HE WAS NEVER KNOWN PEACE. HIS HALF BROTHER IS HIS GREATEST ENEMY. HIS SON IS DEAD, MURDERED BY YET ANOTHER ENEMY. HIS WIFE TRIED TO KILL HIM, THEN ABANDONED HIM. HIS MEMORIES BETRAY HIM. IN POSEIDON'S AND NOW HE HAS LEFT THE CITY
HE BELONGS EVERYWHERE AND FEELS AT HOME NOWHERE
THE WORLD KNOWS HIM AS KING OF THE SEVEN SEAS
HE IS
AQUAMAN
AND IT IS ALONE

By looking at Aquaman from another direction, McLaughlin thinks things will go swimmingly well for the Sea King's new series.

"We'll be dealing more with the city of Tritonis. The Merpeople will have a confrontation with their protector, Iquia."

Aquaman will have *some* help along the way from old and new friends.

"Vulko will be in there all along. There's a new character named F'ancha in the Council of Ministers on Poseidonis. He's an expert on surface affairs and worships the ground Aquaman walks on—or the water Aquaman swims in, as the case may be," laughs McLaughlin. "There'll be King Thesily, the present King and the King before Aquaman. He once renounced the throne because Aquaman is the true heir. On the surface, there's an American diplomat named Mission who retired in his 70s and becomes the U.N. advisor to Poseidonis.

"Aquaman will be forced into going between the two worlds more because certain events will propel him. The big thing Kevin and I wanted to do with the series was, if an event happens in issue #1, that event will have continuing repercussions. Some will go for quite some time, some won't. Some characters who appear trivial in issue #1 might become very important later," McLaughlin comments.

"In the first issue, Aquaman's at war with a country called Oumland. We got tired of Arab terrorist nations so we invented a Scandinavian terrorist nation," the writer explains. "The first four issues deal with Oumland declaring war on Poseidonis, which brings Aquaman back there. Also, it shows the effects of war on a city that has been self-contained for 4,000 years. Problems could occur with the dome; those people will now have to deal with the sea as they never have before. We're looking at the first seven issues as seven self-contained chapters to a novel, which will position Aquaman in the DC Universe, hopefully where we remember him."

Why all of this interest in Aquaman? Like many other writers, McLaughlin jumped to work on a familiar hero because of the comics of his youth.

"It's kind of serendipitous that I ended up writing *Aquaman*, because it was my favorite character when I was a child. I was an incredibly big fan. One of the first comics I remember is *Aquaman*. I remember first identifying with the names of the people creating the book. I remember when Dick Giordano first took over as editor back in the days of 12-cent comics. He had a little caricature of himself on the letters page and a little letter introducing himself. I used to go down to Wilkie's General Store. We were living in Canada at the time and there was only one store within a decent distance. They only had one spinner rack, and *Aquaman* was there."

John Byrne recently refashioned Aquaman's fellow wet one, Marvel's Prince Namor the Sub-Mariner (CS #12). "They're not so different in terms of their powers," McLaughlin allows, "but in terms of personality, I think they're just miles apart. The Sub-Mariner is a fairly pompous individual—someone used to getting his way all of the time, as opposed to Aquaman. Aquaman's much more of a mediator. Aquaman has some real strong ideas on what should be done environmentally. If he had his way, things would be very much different. But he realizes that he's *not* going to have his way."

Artist Ken Hooper (whose work has appeared in *Mister Miracle* and *Star Trek*), editor Dooley and McLaughlin keep in close touch.

"I plot out an issue in prose form of page one, page two, etc., then I send it to Kevin," says McLaughlin. "He and I talk over any problems and then I go back and do a full script. Then, we hash out any problems and it goes to Ken Hooper. If Ken has any questions, he calls me or I call him. It's a pretty close team.

"Kevin is very much a hands-on editor, for which I'm very grateful. He has been a tremendous help. If I have an idea for an issue, I let him know and tell him this is the point I want to make. He really helps shape it. And Ken's very open to talking about changes. The first time we all sat down together was at the Oaklandcon. We were sitting there like three people all with the same ideas. We all wanted to do the same thing: A superhero comic that's as exciting as possible and at the same time, something that's a little different, not the standard 'superhero-beats-the-guy-up-every-issue' thing."

Most new writers seem to have trouble deciding how to use established characters, and McLaughlin says he was no different. But, after getting the feel for his direction, he says the journey was smooth sailing.

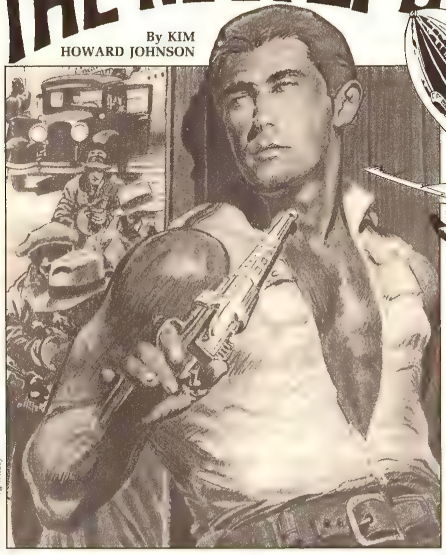
"For the first issues, until I really made it understood where I thought the character was coming from, it was like walking on eggshells," he recalls. "Especially, I remember, I would get my little packets from DC with copies of *Hawkworld* and *Legion* that were just filled with letters saying 'How could you *destroy* my favorite character?' and 'It's *not* the character I grew up with.'

"We aren't creating a new

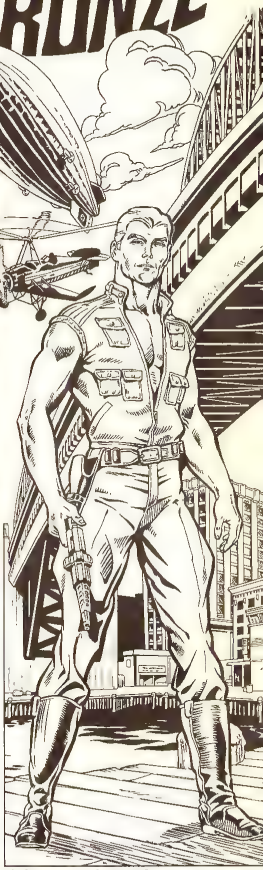
(continued on page 50)

THE MAN OF BRONZE

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON



Cover Art: Doug Wildey



Once again, Doc Savage finds adventure in comics.

The Man of Bronze doesn't adapt easily to comic books. Gold Key tried in the '60s and failed. Marvel tried in the '70s and failed. DC Comics tried in the '80s and failed.

Whatever their quality (a point hotly debated by fans), those series ultimately wound down due to lack of sales. Now, Doc Savage is returning to comics again, and writer Mark Ellis says that this time, Millennium Comics' *Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze* will succeed.

Ellis says he has learned from the previous attempts, and this time around, they'll be doing it differently—and properly. "We're approaching it from the personality side of the characters, trying to make them a little more three-dimensional and human," he explains, noting that the initial four-issue storyline will reflect this idea.

"In 'The Monarch of Armageddon,' Doc is fed up with the life he has been living, and he wants to see about getting into a normal existence and relationship. He's tired of somebody coming up the Empire State Building every five minutes to throw a bomb into his office!

"This isn't something I've just pulled out of thin air, though. There seem to be three stages of Doc's personality in the novels. In the early ones, he was this vengeful, bloody-handed juggernaut of destruction. Later, he adapted this stoic, almost

Clark Savage Jr., the Man of Bronze, returns for comics action in a Millennium mini-series.

Vulcan-like demeanor. In the late '30s, Doc started exhibiting doubts about his 'profession,' and occasionally expressed dissatisfaction with how abnormal his life was becoming. These bits were brief, almost subliminal, but [primary author Lester] Dent was obviously trying to give Doc an extra dimension. One book even mentioned that he was afraid to go out to a movie because an enemy might recognize him standing in a ticket line! So, Doc *was* a little bit tired of the whole thing."

Doc Savage remains one of the most successful pulp heroes ever created, with Bantam Books having reprinted all of his pulp adventures in paperback from 1964-1990. But Savage's exploits haven't ended. The first new Savage novel in 45 years, Philip José Farmer's *Escape From Loki*, was published by Bantam in August. *Python Isle*, out this month, initiates a new series of original novels by COMICS SCENE's Will Murray (see page 5).

The Man of Bronze has been credited with inspiring or influencing numerous other fantasy/adventure characters since the '30s, from James Bond to Indiana Jones and the Rocketeer. Some of the original advertisements for his pulp magazine even referred to him as a "Superman," long before *Action Comics #1*.

"I knew that Doc was the forebear to Superman—obviously, they took everything they could from Doc to put in Superman—I was always surprised nobody sued them," laughs Ellis. "It's just amazing to me as I read those books how much stuff filtered down to other things. I'm firmly convinced that *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* derived stuff from *Doc Savage*—even *The Wild, Wild West*. I read a Doc book where Monk had a knife blade in his boot that popped out when he clicked the heel—that was one of Jim West's little tricks," and was also used in *From Russia With Love*, Ellis notes. "It was funny to me that all of these gadgets Doc carried on him became passé, and when they were recycled in the '60s for some of these TV shows, they seemed so fresh, startling and new!

"When I read the *Doc* novels as a kid, it was hard to realize that they were written in the '30s, because they seemed so much in tune with the times. I read two or three of them before I realized—I knew there were anachronisms, like when people were riding on running boards," he laughs. "But they really *do* hold up. As flawed as some of the writing was in the *Doc Savage* novels, they still are, in my opinion, far better written than *The Shadow* and *The Spider*.

"Some people asked if we were going to do a 'Dark Doc.' There's more stuff in his past that we could develop to be this type of mean character—in his first two stories, he was a nasty guy—but we didn't really consider it. That may have been what DC's intent was—not to make him a dark hero, but to make the stories themselves much darker, with the thing in there about Long Tom betraying Doc to the Nazis, which I *never* bought!"

"The Monarch of Armageddon" takes place in spring 1938, according to Ellis, who says it's a sequel to the novel *The Devil Genghis*, the second Savage saga featuring the arch-villain John Sunlight.

"John Sunlight managed to escape being hacked to pieces at the end of *The Devil Genghis*, though he was messed up pretty badly. Sunlight is probably the closest thing Doc ever had to a recurring villain. He had some great adversaries, but Sunlight was the only one who was tough enough to come back twice—even Doc felt Sunlight was the toughest adversary he had ever faced. He was a brilliant man, but a total sociopath as well," says Ellis, who estimates that he has read about 75 percent of the original Doc Savage novels.

"This is Sunlight when he has managed to escape being chopped to pieces. He's still stabbed and skewered, but he has been picked up by this Russian lama in Tibet named Dorjieff, who's actually working for the Nazis. Adolph Hitler—and this is supposedly true—and his inner circle had this secret society within a society called the Thule Society, which believed that there was a subterranean race of super-Aryans," Ellis explains. "They actually sent expeditions to try and find the entrance to the underground world of supermen.

"So, Dorjieff is the ambassador between Nazi Germany and the Thulians, the ancient forebears of the Nordic race. Thule was a kingdom similar to Atlantis that sank during the same cataclysm. Dorjieff recognizes Sunlight and figures, 'We could use this guy,' but Sunlight's thinking the very same thing. Sunlight usurps the plan of

Darryl Banks created the "definitive versions" of Ham, Monk, Renny, Long Tom and Johnny from the novels' descriptions.

Dorjieff and Nazi Germany to use these Thulians for his own ends, and his first goal is to systematically destroy *everything* that Doc Savage cares about—not kill him; just mess him up mentally and emotionally."

Ellis says *Doc Savage* will be presented as an ongoing set of mini-series, similar to Dark Horse's *Indiana Jones* and DC's *Legends of the Dark Knight*. Ideas are on tap for follow-ups to "The Monarch of Armageddon," but Ellis says Millennium wants to make sure this first series is a success before scheduling the next one.

Although "Monarch" spins off one of the original novels, direct adaptations aren't in the cards.

"The few times I've seen that done, it just hasn't been done well," Ellis comments. "I don't know why, whether they tried to adapt them in too short a page count or what.

"I just picked up Gold Key's 1966 version of *The Thousand-Headed Man*. That was pretty unsatisfactory! From what I understand, there was supposed to be a movie version of *The Thousand-Headed Man* around 1966, and this comic was a tie-in. I don't think they gave it any attention.

"The few times that Marvel did adaptations, I just didn't think it was done very well, either. Marvel got off on the wrong foot. In the very beginning, they tried to update Doc and make it modern, and when they saw it didn't work, they switched it back to the 1930s, and they were adapting the novels, one novel in two issues, and that didn't seem to fly. The artwork was real good, though. Their black-and-white magazine came off much better. It had much of the style, but it didn't seem to have much of the substance—it was just superficial.

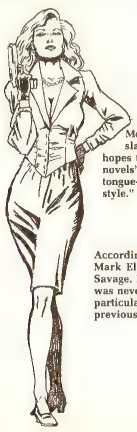
Although he was hacked to pieces in Lester Dent's novel *The Devil Genghis*, arch-villain John Sunlight reappears with an eyepatch and a plan to destroy Doc.

All Doc Savage Art: Courtesy Millennium Publishing

"The DC version [CS #2] seems to be on peoples' minds," says Ellis.

"Denny O'Neil and Mike Barr, who wrote the DC *Doc*, are probably two of the finest writers in the field. Denny, in particular, is responsible for an astonishing amount of groundbreaking work, but I think DC's approach was skewed from the outset. The question of how a Doc Savage who hadn't aged dealt with the '80s was sound, but I don't think most Doc fans wanted to see Monk, Ham and the others as liver-spotted octogenarians!" Ellis exclaims.

"My feeling is that *Doc Savage* wasn't something that either Denny or Mike felt particularly comfortable with. They weren't bad—they just weren't Doc! By the time they switched the comic back to the 1930s [setting], it was too late."



Past *Savage* comics focused on Monk & Ham's slapstick. Ellis hopes to restore the novels' "unique tongue-in-cheek style."

According to writer Mark Ellis, Pat Savage, Doc's cousin, was never "dealt with particularly well" in previous comics.

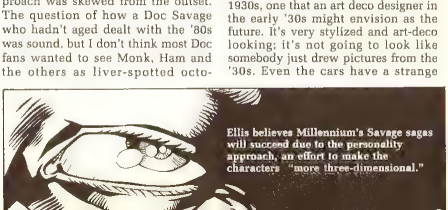
Despite these past misfires, Ellis is confident that he can get *Doc Savage* right in comics.

"It's really not that difficult," he observes. "Doc is the product of an experiment, and even though he wasn't raised to be much of a human being, he really was—it was just because of his upbringing and conditioning that he tried to control his emotions.

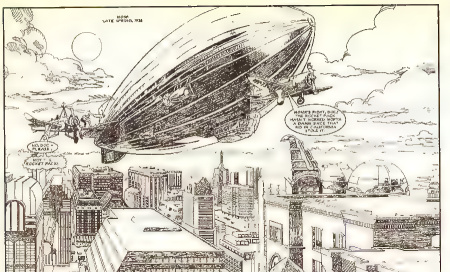
"In the first issue, Doc ends up trying to court Princess Monja, the Mayan princess who lives where he has his gold supply. He doesn't really know how to do it, so Monk gives him some pointers. Unfortunately, when he gets there, he finds out that John Sunlight has been there first."

Translating pulp stories to comics today involves a number of problems. "Period pieces don't seem to work very well, and if you do a literal translation of certain time periods, it can come off a bit stodgy, and you can lose members of the *X-Men* brigade," he says, explaining that they're hoping to avoid that by creating their own version of the 1930s.

"Our creative director, Melissa Martin, designed a semi-futuristic 1930s, one that an art deco designer in the early '30s might envision as the future. It's very stylized and art-deco looking; it's not going to look like somebody just drew pictures from the '30s. Even the cars have a strange



Ellis believes Millennium's Savage sagas will succeed due to the personality approach, an effort to make the characters "more three-dimensional."



These yarns are set in a post-Depression era which might have been envisioned by a '30s art deco designer (or a Rocketeer?).

pseudo-futuristic look, to overcome the 'stigma-of-the-period-piece.' I don't know if that's true or not, but I keep hearing it. Of course, updating *Doc* didn't work, either."

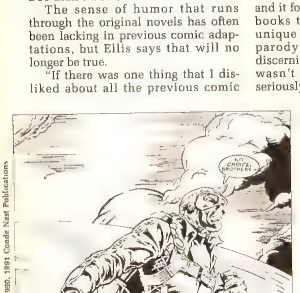
The sense of humor that runs through the original novels has often been lacking in previous comic adaptations, but Ellis says that will no longer be true.

"If there was one thing that I disliked about all the previous comic adaptations, and oddly enough, that they all shared, it was they were all done in a rather grim tone, and the humor that came across was very broad and juvenile, almost slapstick, and it focused on Monk and Ham. The books themselves developed this unique tongue-in-cheek style—not parody, but with enough for the discerning reader to realize that Dent wasn't taking all this particularly seriously! So, we're putting that touch in there, like Doc's obvious momentary distaste when Monk's trying to give him pointers about how to romance a woman—he's not very fond of that," Ellis laughs.

Doc's five aides and his cousin Pat Savage will also be humanized in this new series. "Pat will figure prominently, because I never thought she was dealt with particularly well in any of the comic-book adaptations.

"Nobody ever asked why all of these guys were hanging around together—obviously they were friends and cared very much for one another, but that never really came across in the comics. So, I'm stepping up the camaraderie factor—these guys wouldn't be hanging around together after all these years if they didn't genuinely care about one another. As different as they are, they have this bond. They are like brothers, and I'm making the relationship between them a bit more defined.

(continued on page 52)



"Doc fans will appreciate this comic," says Ellis.

Doc's "tired of somebody coming up the Empire State Building every five minutes to throw a bomb in his office," Ellis notes.

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All Doc Savage Interior Art: Darryl Banks/Robert Lewis

AGE-OLD HEROES

Blasting out of their long-forgotten past, the Protectors get a new lease on life.

By PAUL ROBB

Superheroes working for the government? Thanks to "Project: Golden Age," heroes who haven't seen action since Centaur Publications first published them in the 1940s will be revived in *The Protectors*, Malibu Graphics' first attempt at a unified superhero team book. Scheduled for a January 1992 release, the six-issue mini-series is scripted by writer R.A. Jones, while comics newcomer Thomas Derenick handles artist chores.

Jones recalls how he landed the project: "[Editor] Chris Ulm approached me about it at the 1990 Chicago Con, and I was curious about it. Later, at the San Diego Con, I finally became interested." The scribe feels that one of the toughest things about working on the project was researching the characters' backgrounds. "Most of these heroes appeared in solo features and, as far as I know, have *never* appeared together in a story. You can't find these Centaur issues very easily, since Centaur literally went out of business on the eve of World War II."

Fortunately for Jones, science-fiction writer and comics historian Ron Goulart had already done some research and written up preliminary notes about the 1937-1941 period when Centaur was publishing comics. In addition, a friend of Jones had purchased a comic-book collection on microfiche and donated it to the University of Tulsa. Some Centaur issues were included.

"I sat down and went through the issues taking notes, but I still had to create some original characters. There are two reasons for that: One, these heroes pre-date Wonder Woman; there were very few costumed heroines, and only one from Centaur—a villainess called the Witch. The only thing I kept about her was the name, since I liked it, but now she's part of the team.

"Two: There are still some characters I don't know anything about, and some I know only by name. These Centaur issues were basically anthologies, with eight stories, each with different characters."

Art: Samuel Clarke Hawbaker

Jones also encountered difficulties with the bad guys. Centaur had few antagonists to choose from. "Many of them were killed off. For today's audiences, we need dynamic, colorful villains." His villain in the series, "Mr. Monday," is based on a character Jones created as a teenager.

Set in present-day Washington, D.C., the story opens with Mr. Monday and his terrorist group attacking a local police station for the sheer joy of it. This disturbs many people, since Mr. Monday is the first costumed supervillain (or hero) the world has seen for five years.

Masked Marvel: Father's successor.
The Eye: Once a giant floating eye.
Man O War: Centaur's super-patriot.
Aura: Considers herself the team's "token black."
The Witch: A former Centaur villainess.

All Color Protectors Character Designs: Jerry Bingham

Something happened in summer 1986 which completely destroyed a small Virginia town and sent all of the heroes into semi-voluntary retirement. The details of that event have been kept top-secret.

The government has relocated and kept tabs on these heroes. Now, thanks to Mr. Monday's threat, the greenlight is given to "Project: Golden Age," a secret government project in which the retired superheroes are under government supervision. And the President organizes the Protectors.

Jones runs down the Protectors' team roster, providing key facts on each hero.

•**The Clock:** Brian O'Brien, who, in a domino mask and evening clothes, was the first masked hero in comics in the pulp-hero mold. The name derives from his habit of leaving a calling card, which reads "The Clock Has Struck." In *The Protectors*, he'll be his actual age, 72, long since retired as the Clock. He still plays a pivotal role, however, since he's now President of the United States. He authorizes the team's formation.

•**(Original) Masked Marvel:** Philip Reinhart (a name Jones created for him), a non-super-powered retired hero. Although he's now 70, "He is the man chosen by the President to lead the team," Jones says.

•**(New) Masked Marvel:** Richard Reinhart, Philip's son. Like his father, he has no powers. He decides to join the Protectors as the new Masked Marvel; his father doesn't approve, but the President overrules him. Notes the writer, "This will be a source of conflict, since there's friction between the two. The son attempts to prove himself to his father, to show that he can accomplish some good."

•**Marcia Beckworth:** She is the team's P.R. person. "Originally, the Masked Marvel character had three associates who aided him. One was killed off, but this is that character's granddaughter.

"I've made a conscious effort to use as many female characters or ethnic mixes—especially blacks—as I can," says Jones. "Too many comics tend to show the world as predominantly white, and it's *not*. This is imperative, especially since the stories are set in Washington, D.C., which has a population that's 70% black. I hope to use more black and female characters in the future."

• **Man O War:** Although this is one of the original Centaur characters, the hero wasn't around in the 1940s and is a younger man in Jones' version. "To compare him to other existing characters, he's of the Captain America/Shield-ilk, a costumed super patriot," Jones explains. "Man O War originally appeared in two issues in 1941. He had no real name, so I named him Clay Carter. He has more super powers than Captain America, is much stronger and faster than the average human, but he's not in Superman's class."

•**Amazing Man:** John Aman is the *same* original character from the 1940s. Now in his 70s, he has the stamina and physical looks of a 30-year-old. According to the scribe, "He uses some secret rituals taught to him as a young man that help keep him immortal. He was raised by a cult of monks in Tibet. This character was created for Centaur by Bill Everett,

who later created the Sub-Mariner for Timely [now Marvel]. Eventually, they put Amazing Man in a costume, but you can trace his heritage to the pulp heroes."

Closest to the Superman type on the team, Amazing Man has super-strength and recuperative powers, can see in the dark, fly and teleport himself only in the line of sight. He disappears in a green mist, which is why some crooks also call him "The Green Mist." His close companion, Zona Henderson, is an elderly woman now, but still young in his eyes. He takes his condition for granted, but she doesn't.

•**Fantom**: Jones has no actual name for him yet. This character originally appeared in the 1930s under three different identities—"Fanto-Man," "Fantom of World's Fair" (a reference to the World's Fair of 1939) and just "Fantom."

"He's the Batman type of the group—dark and mysterious," Jones notes. "No one knows much about him or his origins. He appears to have been around for hundreds of years. He has slightly greater strength, hypnotic powers and is a very independent sort."

•**Eternal Man**: "Prince Zardi" of the mythical Zandipore, who's 6,000 years old. "He's our sorcerer type. The interesting thing about him is a visual gimmick, where he's just sitting around the house, looking ancient. But, when he swings into action, he takes his magic cape and transforms into a young man."

Zardi keeps his girl friend, Janni Bayless, around as well. She's nearly 80 years old, but Eternal Man sees her as still being young. Janni is a prisoner in his mansion—if she leaves, the aging process begins and she returns to her actual age.

•**The Ferret**: Cal Denton. Jones says he kept only the two names, but in every other way the character is his original creation. "He's our Wolverine, with greater-than-normal strength, acrobatic powers and keener senses. He's a sneaky, skinny sort, which his name reflects, as well as a rock singer. It's like, 'What if Jim Morrison had been a costumed hero?'

"Ferret has a refined sense of humor and is a womanizer, but has a rougher edge than the other characters do—a vicious streak. He's the team's loose cannon."

•**Mighty Man**: Scott Pearson. "With this character, I have kept his costumed name and powers, but the civilian name is mine. He's different from the others in that he's married

Art: Samuel Lake Hawbaker

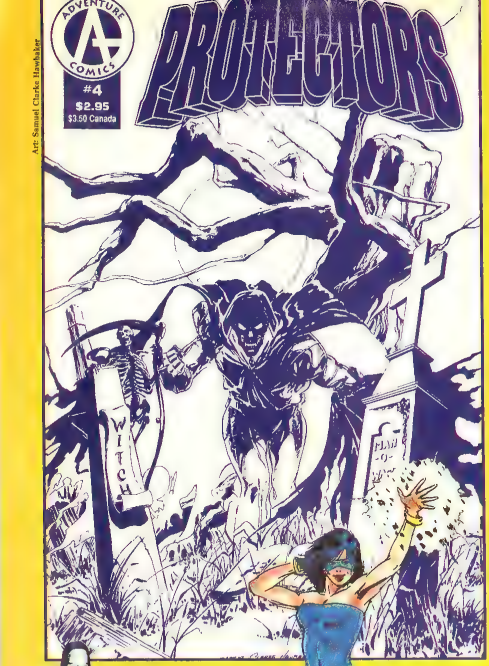
With *Protectors*, "there is potential for lots of spin-offs," reveals Jones.

Amazing Man: An immortal superman.

The Ferret, whom *Protectors* writer R.A. Jones calls "the team's loose cannon," has a disagreement with his birdlike colleague, Airman.

Art: Thomas Derenick/Fred Perry

The Arrow: *Not* a team member.



Art: Samuel Clarke Hawbaker

The Protectors' code of ethics states they won't kill anyone; their enemies don't have that problem.

and has two children. His main ability is being able to alter his body's shape," Jones says.

•**Airman:** Drake Stevens is the team's "Hawkman/Angel type. Very birdlike with artificial wings. he can fly at great speeds. He wears a mask that has built-in lenses, which enhance his birdlike sense of direction."

•**Aura:** According to Jones, Morgan DuBay "is a black woman and the only totally original character created just for this book. She's married and has a teenage daughter. Her ability to excite the molecules in the air around her, creating an aura effect, can act like a defensive force-field or as beams of energy. She believes she's the team's 'token black' and resents that. She's just as interesting for her personal life as her heroic one."

•**The Witch:** Andrea Nastrova has what the writer describes as "an alluring affect on men. She can fly and appears to have greater-than-normal strength. The only thing I know about the original character was that she was a villainess who fought Mighty Man. I wanted her to be a hero instead, but I kept the animosity between those two."

•**Blaze:** Brandee Douglas, the youngest member of the Protectors. She has the ability to generate electrical bolts.

I considered calling them Force One, but decided on the Protectors instead," Jones says. "They're on the government payroll, paid to be superheroes. It's sort of *Hill Street Blues*, only with superheroes. It's a *job* for these characters—they clock in, and, at the day's end, they clock out and take off their costumes."

Showing a human side to the superheroes' lives is what the writer calls a balancing act. "We want something mainstream enough for those who already read superhero comics, while at the same time, breaking current superhero concepts with these original heroes. I don't know if I can pull it off or not."

The realism Jones is striving for is part of what he sees as a movement in comics. "There's a big move towards grim, gritty realism, and that will be evident in this book. There are many problems in the city, and not all of the heroes get along well.

"I wanted to use a 1960s mentality in that the heroes have a code of ethics, which states they won't kill; that's part of their charter. Not being able to kill will be a real restraint, although it might not be if it weren't made public!" he adds. "But, this is

(continued on page 52)

Blaze: Generates electrical bolts.

Fantom: The Protectors' Batman.

BLACK HOOD

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

It's the mask, not the man, that's making the latest Impact on comics.

The mysterious sixth hero of the new Impact Comics line has been unmasked—and he's wearing a *Black Hood*. Scripting his book is Mark Wheatley, a comics veteran, but a newcomer to superhero adventures.

"I probably never would have chosen to do a superhero book myself," explains Wheatley, who discussed his work on *Breathtaker* in CS #15. "I didn't have an aversion to it, I grew up reading them, and I'm just at the point now where I realize I don't really read them anymore. And here, a guy offers me a chance to write a superhero book. We did extensive development on the line in general, and developed bibles for the individual books, so it was up to me to sit down and create a character from scratch called 'the Black Hood.' "

Impact editor Mike Gold asked Wheatley to write the new title. "Mike circled me like a shark for several years and finally came in for the kill!" he laughs.

"I *didn't* choose to do the Black Hood. I chose to do Steel Sterling, but everybody ganged up on me and said, 'That's a *stupid* name!' I said, 'Wait a minute. Let's look at this objectively. Batman. Superman. These are *not* stupid names? In the context of the superhero world, what's stupid about Steel Sterling?' But, it was vetoed."

Instead, Wheatley says he succumbed to the pressure and agreed to do the Black Hood, although the name is virtually the *only* similarity to the original Archie/MLJ character.

"I told Mike Gold, 'I don't know the first thing about the Black Hood,' and he said, 'Fine. You're perfect!' The next time we talked, I *still* hadn't gotten the message, and I said, 'Could you get me some of the back issues so I can at least get familiar with the character?' He said, 'Well, you know his name is the Black Hood, right? What else do you need?' I said, 'Ah, freedom! I like that!' "

Wheatley completely ignored the previous versions of the character, one a typical costumed superhero and the other a more realistic, gun-toting, leather-garbed adventurer. Consequently, there are no supporting characters, villains or background from the old book. "*Nothing* is there that was ever there before, except the name 'the Black Hood.' "

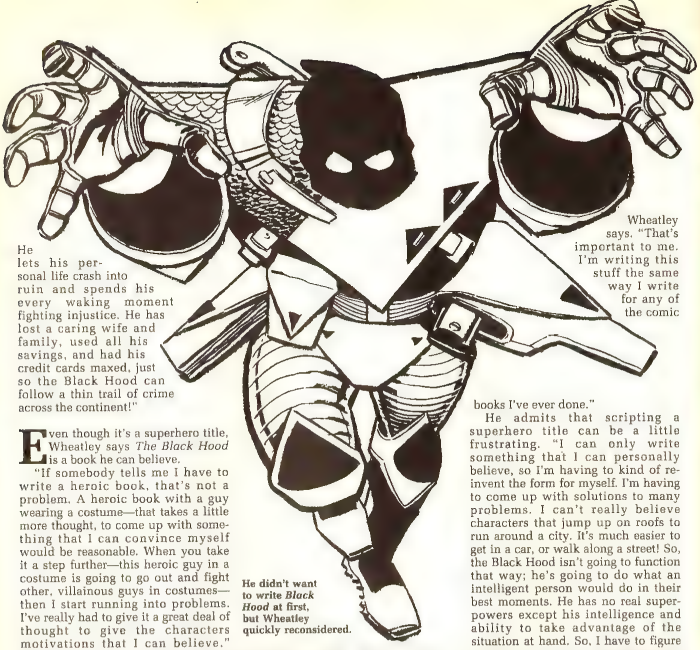
The character is already familiar to Impact readers. "They wanted the Black Hood to be the *first* crossover character in the line, so he's appearing in all of the other titles before he gets his own book. That means that even though I'm creating him, by the time I got to him, he wouldn't be a virgin anymore! He wouldn't be a pure character, and since my background was all creator-owned material, it seemed a little alien to me," he says. However, this development gave Wheatley an idea for a surprise twist in the series' very first issue that sees a *major* change in the Black Hood.

"I have heard since then, that by doing that [surprise], I *have* duplicated something from the old series: the idea of a multi-generational character. This isn't multi-generational the way I'm doing it. It's an interesting concept.

"Everything that we're doing with the book concerns his multi-characters. He's several different guys in the series during the first year. There's one guy who'll continue to be the Black Hood over the long haul."

The first issue will introduce Wheatley's initial conception of the Black Hood.

"His name is Wayne Sidmondson. He's a real tough s.o.b., into fighting techniques and weapons from all of history. His only comment to reporters as the Black Hood is: 'With law, justice is a waiting game. I'm the Black Hood. Justice, no waiting.' Wayne is single-minded, tenacious, resourceful and consumed by the idea of justice and being the Black Hood.



He lets his personal life crash into ruin and spends his every waking moment fighting injustice. He has lost a caring wife and family, used all his savings, and had his credit cards maxed, just so the Black Hood can follow a thin trail of crime across the continent!"

Even though it's a superhero title, Wheatley says *The Black Hood* is a book he can believe.

"If somebody tells me I have to write a heroic book, that's not a problem. A heroic book with a guy wearing a costume—that takes a little more thought, to come up with something that I can convince myself would be reasonable. When you take it a step further—this heroic guy in a costume is going to go out and fight other, villainous guys in costumes—then I start running into problems. I've really had to give it a great deal of thought to give the characters motivations that I can believe."

He didn't want to write *Black Hood* at first, but Wheatley quickly reconsidered.

Wheatley says. "That's important to me. I'm writing this stuff the same way I write for any of the comic books I've ever done."

He admits that scripting a superhero title can be a little frustrating. "I can only write something that I can personally believe, so I'm having to kind of reinvent the form for myself. I'm having to come up with solutions to many problems. I can't really believe characters that jump up on roofs to run around a city. It's much easier to get in a car, or walk along a street! So, the Black Hood isn't going to function that way; he's going to do what an intelligent person would do in their best moments. He has no real superpowers except his intelligence and ability to take advantage of the situation at hand. So, I have to figure

Impact Trademark & DC Comics

According to writer Mark Wheatley, Wayne Sidmondson is "consumed by the idea of justice and being the Black Hood."

All Black Hood Art: Rick Burchett courtesy DC Comics

"There's one guy who'll continue to be the Black Hood over the long haul," Wheatley says. It sure won't be this one.

out reasons why he'll fight these super-villains, and I'm having to develop much more believable ones than you're used to finding!" he laughs. "At the same time, I'm trying to not bog it down in real-world details, and create a quicker read."

His original proposal for the title begins with the line, "There is no hero, only the hood," which he says brings up the multi-generational aspect.

"The hood has a history. The hood got its start in the early Middle Ages as a headsman's mask," Wheatley says, actually reading from his proposal. "It suffers from a curse put upon it by a sorcerer, just before he lost his head. The curse is—this is gonna be corny, but I think it's appropriate—'Whosoever wears the hood, be they compelled, do only good.'

"Over the years, the hood—which was a fairly large piece of cloth when it began—was a cloak, then a coat, then a mask, and now a hood. Whoever was using it felt this compulsion. The hood also grants this clarity of thought—it's like your very best day! It also does the same thing with your agility and ability to move.

"There's a scene in the second issue where the Black Hood is escaping from a hail of bullets, and he's thinking to himself how odd it is. He had always watched TV shows and thought how stupid that the bad guys could shoot machine guns point-blank at the good guys, and manage to always miss. Yet, there he is, in virtually the same situation, and he isn't getting hit! The hood is aiding him, helping him to move just right and stay out of the path of the villains," the writer reveals.

Although the Black Hood was first introduced to readers via crossovers in other titles, those heroes won't be appearing soon in *The Black Hood*.

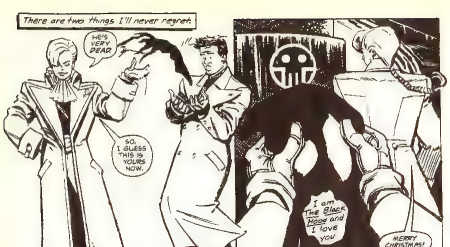
"The only interactions I have planned during the first year are with characters who *don't* have their own titles. I want to keep them a surprise. One will be a secondary, ongoing character until we can spin him off into his own title," he says.

Impact Comics' *Black Hood* belongs to many heroes past & present.

Wheatley has developed an extensive stable of villains for the first two years of the title.

"There's a villain who really holds this series together for the first two or two-and-a-half years, which will be seen as a single storyline, although every issue I am writing has a self-contained plot. She's Pirate Blue.

"She's very intelligent, very tough and absolutely ruthless when there's a need for it. Blue has established a pirating and smuggling operation that uses several US ports, Seaside City, because of its corrupt nature, offers Pirate Blue the nearest thing to a safe harbor," he says. "Seaside City is just off the


There are two things I'll never regret.
HE'S NOT DEAD
SO, I GUESS THIS IS YOURS NOW.
I am The Black Hood and I love you!
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Hit Coffee learns that with the Black Hood, "There is no hero, only the hood."

coast of Maryland. Blue has a small war-surplus submarine, the *Plunder*, most likely German, that she uses for her work. Seaside City is riddled with underground passageways and waterways left over from previous wars and smuggling operations, and she uses these as a harbor, the *only* harbor where she can bring her sub directly into port and maintain it.

"Seaside City is run by mob connections, so she pays Seaside City's mysterious Patriarch for this port. She and the Patriarch's second-in-command, a guy named Hit Coffee, have a run-in with the Black Hood in the very first issue, establishing an ongoing plot thread that runs through the first 24 to 30 issues.

"The third issue, we'll see the Creeptures, very unusual, genetically-altered creatures owned by an entertainer known as Adrian Haskel.

"In issue four, the Black Hood faces Ozone, probably the most powerful villain in the Impact line. [Other villains include] Material Girl, the Headsmen, Shriek, Pandora and the two characters that will come in and introduce the thread that ties everything together, Nobody and Bones. So, Nobody will be in one issue!" Wheatley laughs.

Illustrating these villains and heroes is veteran Rick Burchett. Wheatley, who has never collaborated with Burchett before, says he hopes to again. "It's very impressive and quite a few steps above what I've seen him do before. He has come to life on this stuff.

"The collaboration has been almost invisible; we've only spoken by phone. I've collaborated with quite a few people, but everybody else I've ever collaborated with has been face-to-face, where I've known these people for quite some time personally. I don't know Rick that well, but we seem to be hitting it off on much the same level, because of blind luck and Mike's good sense at putting us together!"

There's another aspect of *The Black Hood* that's new to Wheatley.

"I've never written a book that had to go through the Comics Code, except for the adaptation of *Baron Munchausen*, but nothing was changed in that. Here, the only times it occurred to me that I was writing a Code book was when Rick would say to me, 'Gee, do you think we should do that?' He has been working on Code books for years, but it's always surprising to me. I knew from the start that I couldn't use any bad language, so I have fully embraced the asterisk-exclamation point stuff, and Rick and I are pushing that, because peoples' reactions are a little loud on this. I always found that was just as effective when I was a kid. I *knew* what *that* meant!"

DC Comics went to great lengths to keep *The Black Hood* a secret for as long as possible, although an ad in *Comics Buyers Guide* inadvertently revealed the surprise. "Even *I* hadn't seen the logo! That was my first exposure to it," he laughs. "But, it was too bad. We were going to try and focus attention on it by saying, 'Can you guess what it will be?' It *did* soften the edge."

Even if the mystery is over, though, Mark Wheatley's first superhero is still hiding—under a Black Hood.

BLACK HOOD
JUSTICE IS WAITING
World exclusive story & photos
Armed Vigilante says, "The law is a waiting game!"
Previewing Your New See Thru Bag!
BOOK BONUS!
ELVIS LIVES
And he runs a bait shop in Wisconsin!

News about *Black Hood* is making quite an Impact with the media.

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TURTLE TOONS

WITH $1 BILLION SOLD, THE TEENAGE MUTANT NINJAS DON'T HAVE TO HANG OUT IN SEWERS ANYMORE.

By KYLE COUNTS

Is Fred Wolf the fifth Ninja Turtle? True, he's considerably past his teenage years, and his goatee and businessman-like attire wouldn't work very well with a colored bandana and monogrammed belt buckle. But just as "Fifth Beatle" Brian Epstein made a significant contribution to the Fab Four's musical success, Wolf deserves a special place in the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles archives.

It is Wolf who, as president of Murakami Wolf Swenson Inc. (he likes to joke that MWS stands for "Mr. Wolf's Studio"), teamed up with Playmates Toys in 1987 to produce a five-part animated mini-series based loosely on the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comic book (CS #1). Further, Wolf reworked the Turtles' characters for television, moving them into subterranean headquarters and giving them a hipper, lighter edge and a taste for pizza. It was also his idea to assign each Turtle a color-coded bandana so young fans could tell their green-skinned heroes apart.

One billion dollars in Turtles merchandising and 120 episodes later, the animated adventures of Raphael, Donatello, Leonardo and Michaelangelo are still going strong on the small screen, having entered a new season as part of CBS' highly-rated Saturday morning line-up.

Seated behind his desk at MWS's gleaming, two-year-old facility in Burbank, California—a stone's throw from The Walt Disney Company—Wolf, an amiable man with piercing brown eyes, recounts the beginnings of Turtlemania much as a proud papa might pass around pictures of his newborn child.

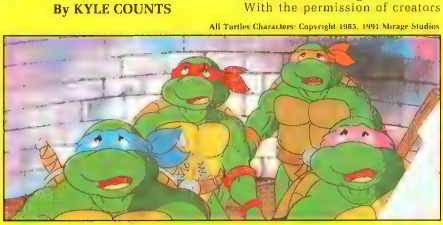
"Playmates was involved with putting out a line of action figures based on the Turtles comic books," he recalls. "They asked me, 'Can you make a TV show out of it?' I said, 'I can't make a TV show out of the comic book, but I can make a TV show using the characters from the comic book.' "

A straight adaptation of the comic wouldn't have worked, Wolf says, because it was "too grim, it had to be redefined for television. Since we were going into the children's market, we had to bring a certain warmth and cartoonishness to the characters. We had to downplay the Ninja element and play up other things.

"We knew we wanted to have a lot of action, but we didn't want violence: Eyes being poked out, teeth flying, chokeholds, that kind of thing. Wherever possible, we decided the Turtles would use their weapons to thwart the forward motion of the bad guys. It wouldn't be a steel bar that hits the villains' heads, but a bag of flour."

With the permission of creators

All Turtles Characters Copyright 1985, 1993 Mirage Studios



MWS president Fred Wolf couldn't turn the "grim" *Turtles* comic into a cartoon; the characters, however, were a different story.

Wolf thinks the Turtles' animated adventures would never have gotten off the ground if they were only "a one-beat concept."

Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird ("We got along with them real well; they were very interested in seeing this all come to life"), Wolf and his teammates at MWS gave the Turtles new and "distinctly different" personalities. "One was [conceived as] a wise-guy, one a surf 'dude,' one a scientific genius, the other an Eagle Scout-type. We gave them a new way of talking, of sleeping, of eating. We brought them into the sewers, made them pizza-eating guys, and added a dimension of fun, silliness and adventure to the material."

The alterations by no means ended there. "We brought their pal, Splinter, into a different form—[a human who turns into] a rat. In the comic book, he was a rat who turned into a big rat. We added Shredder and Krang and gave the Turtles a sidekick, April O'Neil—we took the name from a girl in the comic book—a TV field reporter who hadn't quite reached Connie Chung's status. Bebop and Rocksteady were street toughs who went through a mutation process to become assistants to Shredder and Krang.

"Why did we do all that for just five episodes? Because we believed the show was going to do so well that someday we would do a full season [13] of them. In my mind, the show jelled right off; we sensed we had something unique. I guess it's called having faith in yourself and saying, 'Hey, if it's working for us, it's going to work for someone else.' "

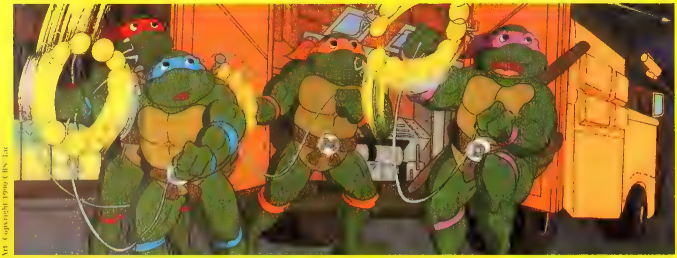
"In my mind, [the *Turtles* cartoon] jelled right off," says Wolf. "We sensed we had something unique."

Buoyed by the mini-series' holiday season ratings performance, Wolf approached Group W Productions, a Westinghouse Broadcasting company, about the possibility of airing a 13-week Turtles show (CS #5). His timing couldn't have been better. The program premiered in September 1988 and became an instant hit.

"I firmly believe that if Group W hadn't believed in the project and offered to fund us, we wouldn't have the Turtles phenomenon we have today," offers Wolf. "Oh, the toys would have sold to a degree, but without the air support, there would never have been a feature—there would have been no reason to do one."

In fall 1989, Group W expanded the series into a nationally syndicated "strip" (a show that airs five days a week in syndication), adding 47 new episodes to the existing 18 (the five-part series plus the first season's 13) in order to create a revolving 13-week cycle of shows. "There's where what we did upfront paid off," Wolf says. "It's called having a solid franchise."

CBS launched a 60-minute version of the series last year, which called for a batch of 18 new half-hours in advance of this season, for a total of 44



The animated *Turtles* replaces the heroes' comic-book violence with "a dimension of fun, silliness and adventure," says Wolf.

Art Copyright 1990 CBS Inc

According to Wolf, the cartoon transformed Raphael and his teenage mutant pals into "pizza-eating guys."

network shows. To date, some 80 episodes have been produced for syndication. Not bad for a quartet of green-colored mutants with a taste for pepperoni and mozzarella.

Of course, the Turtles' success in the animation world also owes something to Wolf's three decades of experience as a producer/director/animator. His "training ground" in the business as a teenager came as a cel washer and "general helper"—and later, in-betweener—at Manhattan's Famous Studios, a division of Paramount that produced Popeye, Little Lulu and Casper the Friendly Ghost cartoons. A two-year stint in the military during the Korean War convinced Wolf to look into other, "less confining" avenues of employment, including the New York police force. He went back to animation only after he saw its massive commercial potential.

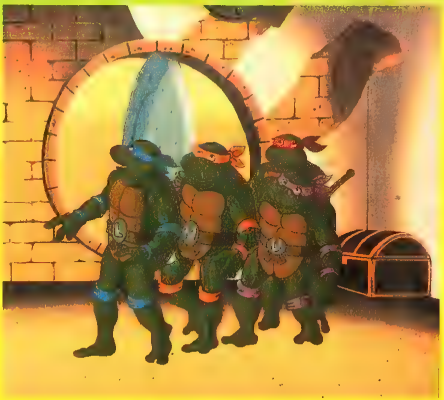
"A series of little animation companies popped up all over New York City about this time," Wolf enthuses. "People at the Famous Studios were making a lot of money moonlighting on animated commercials—black-and-white, mind you, with an ink line that was as thick as a pencil to accommodate the poor transmission. It was the Dark Ages [of commercial animation], when I think back on it."

As an artist, Wolf got valuable on-the-job training from some animation "greats" who were picking up extra money working on TV ads, among them Shamus Culhane, Bill Tytla (noted for the devil in *Fantasia* and Stromboli in Disney's *Pinocchio*), George Canada and others from the Famous Studios group. He also studied advertising design in college so he could "learn everything about advertising there was to know." As a result of what he calls his "eclectic" background, he came out a "storyboard man, an animator, a designer—a total filmmaker."

He moved to California in 1961, hooking up with Format Films to work on a new children's series titled *Alvin and the Chipmunks* (as recently as last year, Wolf was still involved with the Chipmunks, albeit the new Chipmunks show produced by Ross Bagdasarian's son, Ross Jr.). He also put in time with Film Fair and Hanna-Barbera (he designed *The Flintstones*' memorable main titles).

In 1964, Wolf and Jim Murakami, a businessman with solid ad agency contacts whom he had met in New York, formed their own commercial production company, Murakami Wolf Films. For fun, they made animated shorts in their off-hours, which they entered into various film festivals. In 1968, one of Wolf's efforts, "The Box," was awarded an Oscar for Best Animated Short Subject.

That same year, MWF became Murakami Wolf Swenson Inc. (Chuck



Kids can identify the Turtles through their "distinctly different" personalities, and their different-colored bandanas.

All Turtles Animation Art: Copyright 1987 Mirage Studios, Inc. and Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird

Swenson, co-writer of the forthcoming *American Tail* sequel, *Fievel Goes West*, is no longer associated with the firm, though his name remains part of the company logo), branching out into the half-hour animated special arena. Some of those specials were co-productions with the Toei Animation Company in Japan (who would later team with MWS on *The Adventures of the American Rabbit*, a full-length theatrical film released in 1984). MWS also worked on such non-family fare as Frank Zappa's *200 Motels* (1971) and Roger Corman's *Dirty Duck* (1973).

As time went by, Wolf/MWS would add to their list of accomplishments the first animated Movie of the Week, *The Point* (1971), which Wolf animated and directed; *The Mouse and His Child*, a 1977 theatrical release that Wolf produced and co-directed with Chuck Swenson; and an assortment of TV specials, from the Emmy-winning *Free to Be You and Me* (hosted by Marlo Thomas) and *Carlton Your Doorman*, to titles like *Puff the Magic Dragon* and *Peter and The Magic Egg*.

MWS was also contracted by Walt Disney TV in 1985 to produce a season of the studio's first original animated Saturday morning show, *The Wuzzles*. Wolf then loaned himself out to Disney as supervising producer of *DuckTales*' first 65 episodes (CS #4). Once the series "got on its feet," he returned full-time to his own in-house animated projects, notably the launching of MWS's greatest success to date, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. "I was not about to put on the mouse ears forever," Wolf cracks. "Though it was a good relationship and still is, I hope."

To reach a younger audience, Wolf gave the heroes in a half-shell "a certain warmth and cartoonishness."

Although MWS didn't "interface" with the producers of the first live-action Turtles film Wolf offered his services on a *gratis* basis, but nothing ever came of it—in general, he thought it was well done, though "it was darker and far more violent than *anything* we ever do on the TV program. The Turtle costumes by Jim Henson's group were ingenious. I haven't seen the sequel."

Wolf also felt "a certain level of professional gratitude that [the first Turtles movie] didn't depart a great deal from our approach. I was afraid we might start losing our TV audience by confusing them with inconsistencies, although we do get letters from kids asking certain questions that pop up, like, 'How come there are [chest] straps on the toys but not in the cartoons?' But I think the amount of confusion [involving the Turtles movies and TV series] has been quite small."

How, then, might the strip and the Saturday morning shows be different? "They're the same kinds of stories, only with subtle differences in the storyline angles," Wolf replies. "In the CBS series, the first half-hour is what we call our traditional situation. Shredder and Krang being our traditional villains. In the second half-hour, we try to focus in on one of the Turtles. Since Raphael is the group's wise-ass, in one show he gets a chance to be a stand-up comedian. And then there's another where Donatello wants to further his education, so he applies to all kinds of colleges. He gets into one, but they accept him as 'Miss Donna Tello.' So, he has to attend somehow as a girl.

"That's a little of the formula. But then you have new conflicts, new antagonists. Basically, the shows are interchangeable. If you saw one episode, you would have no way of knowing [which format it was intended for]—in fact, I don't have any

(continued on page 66)

CAPTAIN AMERICA ON ICE

BY PAT JANKIEWICZ

Writer Steve Tolkin explains why the sentinel of liberty is still missing in action.

You've seen the action-filled clips. You've seen the stills and posters. You've even seen the articles in COMICS SCENE, but the film itself remains a mystery. Where is *Captain America: The Movie?*

Produced by 21st Century in 1989, it remains unseen two years later. The only way to see it is illegally, as dealers hawk bootleg video copies (for $20-$50), and the Marvel Comics table clogs convention floors by screening a promo reel that promises "Coming Soon." As the comic book hero's 50th year closes, the film is still missing, frozen on a shelf.

The project first jumped to life thanks to a screenplay by Steve Tolkin. It captured the character's "man out of time" background, as Steve Rogers emerges from suspended animation to find today's world a shallow, materialistic place. (The Red Skull is now a multi-millionaire!) Cap finds most of his loved ones dead, jaded or aged. The script inspired so much enthusiasm with producers and actors that it finally forced the long-stalled project into production. To those who've seen it, the finished film is both a mystery and a muddle, an excitement and a disappointment.

As a modern-day millionaire in *Captain America* screenwriter Steve Tolkin's script, the Red Skull (Scott Paulin) can buy some really fine torture items.

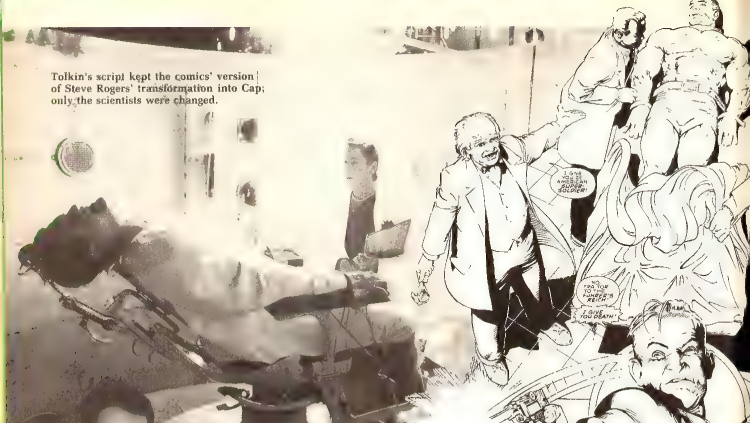
All Captain America Movie Photos: Copyright 1989, 1990 21st Century Productions N.V. & Marvel Entertainment Group

In addition to having several movies in development, the architect-turned-screenwriter wrote the Oscar-nominated short *12:01* and had one of his works featured in *American Film*'s prestigious "10 Best Unproduced Scripts in Hollywood."

Tolkin tried to approach *Captain America* in a fresh way. "My take was that he's the absolutely sweetest, most innocent guy; totally guileless," the writer explains. "He's like a crab without a shell, in a world where everybody is completely defended, cut off from their emotions. When he becomes Captain America, he doesn't change at all; he stays himself.

"Quite honestly, I took a leftist slant on the whole thing—I saw it as my leftist superhero story. The basic

Tolkin's script kept the comics' version of Steve Rogers' transformation into Cap; only the scientists were changed.



The writer admits that before being assigned to write the movie script, "I had never *heard* of Captain America."

Photo: Lisa Ortiz

Art: Kevin Maguire/Joe Rubinstein

story is idealistic: An earnest, sweet, naive kid from 1943 appears in Los Angeles in the late '80s, and it's just what that means. Anyway, all of the ideas of that subtext about the idealistic '40s vs. the materialistic '80s are all gone from the finished movie. Some of it was shot, but it didn't make the final cut. Since I last saw it, even more of it is gone.

"Captain America goes off to Italy to fight the Red Skull, who has a rocket pointed at Washington. He gets frozen in ice for more than 40 years, and when he comes back, his girl friend is now in her late 60s. He meets her daughter, played by the same actress [Kim Gillingham], and continues his quest against the Red Skull. They meet in the movie's beginning and end."

Tolkin also found a way to bond hero and villain. "What I came up with is that the Red Skull and Captain America are both products of the same experiment," he explains, "one performed by the Nazis, and one in America, to create a good soldier. The scientist, Dr. Maria Vasari, decides it was used for evil by the Third Reich, and she finds a way for it to be used for good. I thought it would be great if they were linked, and everybody loved that they were both created by the same parent, in a way. That's completely my invention, and not out of the comics."

Unlike other Marvel Comics adaptations, *Captain America* had input from the company. "One of the great pleasures of writing *Captain America* was getting to meet Stan Lee," the writer states. "He's a great guy, and his wife is wonderful. Stan told me how much he wanted them to stick to my script and how they promised him that they would. I wrote the script right when [21st Century exec] Menahem Golan lost the rights and needed to get them back. I actually helped by telling Stan, 'Look, they promised to stick to it.' It was a moment where Stan actually had the ability to put a nix on the project but didn't, because he loved the script.

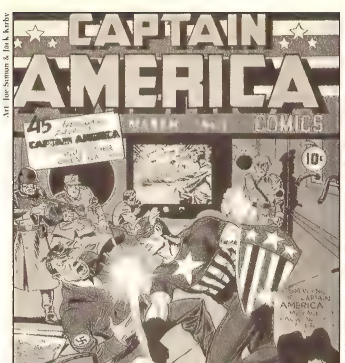
"Stan put in specific comments which I incorporated into the script. His big throughline was 'less superpowers.' His point was that Steve's not a superhero; he's not Superman. He can't punch his hand through steel. Stan would take out stunts where he jumped over walls. Stan says that Steve Rogers is brave and true more than strong."

Did the writer's research include consulting with Captain America creators Joe Simon and Jack Kirby? "No, I've never met them. Are they alive?" he asks. "I would have loved for them to have read my script. [For Simon & Kirby's lively view on the Captain America legend, see CS #11].

"Cap's origin is exactly as it was in the comic, the transformation scene—you know how during Steve Rogers' transformation, the spy is there and kills the scientist? We do that; she dies in Captain America's arms. The only difference is that the scientist isn't a woman in the comic. She's killed by Bill Mumy. Bill and Darren McGavin play the same character, young and old."

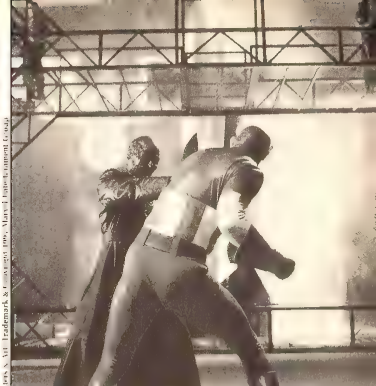
Despite Tolkin's attempt to stay true to the character, "I wasn't exactly a comic book fan, but I read them. I never read *Captain America* before I got the assignment," he admits. "I must confess that I had never even *heard* of Captain America before I got the assignment! I can't believe I hadn't. I read *Richie Rich*, *Archie* and a lot of *Superman*!

"So, I read a couple of *Captain America* comics [for reference], enough to know that I didn't *need* to



Art: Joe Simon & Jack Kirby

Although Tolkin never consulted with Captain America creators Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, "I would have loved for them to have read my script."



Captain America Chronicles #1 (Trademark, ©1991 respective owners, Marvel Entertainment Group)

Cap's (Matt Salinger) fight with the Red Skull begins during World War II, but ends more than 40 years later.

read any," he states. "I got a couple things out of them, though. I got my whole story out of one frame; I think it was a Stan Lee thing, it was a great shot of Captain America from below. He has just come back from the ice in the '60s, and he's thinking, 'What's wrong with all these people? Don't they believe in anything?' I realized, 'I'll do that for the '80s!' That one frame gave me the whole idea of Captain America going through all this soul-searching over what has happened to the world.

"To prepare myself for writing this, I watched every James Bond movie I hadn't already seen. I wanted great action sequences, but I wrote one that they couldn't do financially. At a seaside resort, Captain America and Sharon are chased by the bad guys, so they grab a paddle boat. It breaks apart, so they jump on an aquaplane, then on a jet ski, and then water skis. Every possible water sport conveys the chase, like one of those big ski chases in a Bond movie.

"It would have been great," he opines, "but they said it would have taken two weeks to shoot at least, because of the unpredictability of weather and water. I had a big fight in the ruins of Pompeii—in the gladitorial arena—between Captain America and the Red Skull's minions, but they didn't shoot in Italy, as was originally planned. It's set in Italy and begins there in the '30s. Most of it was shot in Yugoslavia, which looks more like Italy than Italy."

Although Tolkin wasn't delighted with certain aspects of *Captain America*, he was pleased with the actor portraying the star-spangled avenger. "Matt Salinger [CS#17] is great as Captain America. Matt's a wonderful guy. The problem was the film's cutting; they cut so many of his scenes. He's sad because of what's happened to the world, but they cut all the scenes where he's dealing with how the world has changed. As Matt and I joked, 'It's as though he's moping through the movie,' but it's not his fault. There's no reason for him to be so sad in the movie as it exists. It was a beautiful performance, but scenes are missing.

"The actor who plays the Red Skull, Scott Paulin [STARLOG #157], is also amazing—he doesn't look as haunting in person as he does in character." Tolkin's screenplay makes one sympathize with Cap's oldest villain. "There was a complicated subplot that I really loved, in which the Red Skull is a young boy. In the film's first scene, he's a 10-year old child prodigy playing a piano in his parents' living room. He's a brilliant pianist: the house is filled with adoring friends and his mother is turning the music pages. He's playing a Chopin prelude, and just before he finishes, the fascist guards come in, blow the windows open, murder his parents and drag him away. When we see him years later, he's a millionaire industrialist, has had plastic surgery and looks almost human."

Unlike his comic book counterpart, the film Skull isn't evil so much as a tragic, misunderstood figure. "His hand was cut off earlier in the story, but he climbs to his castle's ramparts, where he turns to his 10-foot black grand piano. He plays the [Chopin prelude] up to the point where he was interrupted years ealier, and he can't get past that point.

"Steve Rogers has a tape of that event, and he hears the piano playing and the Red Skull's mother screaming, 'Tadzio! Tadzio!' [the Skull's real name]. At the end, when the Red Skull is about to blow up all of Southern Europe with an atomic device, Steve turns the tape on. In despair, the Red Skull drops the device, sits down and finally finishes the piece of music. He plays the last chord and dies.

"It would have been very beautiful, but it just *didn't* work," Tolkin announces. "I learned a lesson from it. It

may not have been appropriate to the film. Who's the audience for *Captain America*? I wrote it for me, a 33-year-old, vaguely-leftist LA-based screenwriter in 1987, and that's *not* who the movie's for. If some of that didn't work, it's partly because it wasn't appropriate to the film at all and wasn't done right.

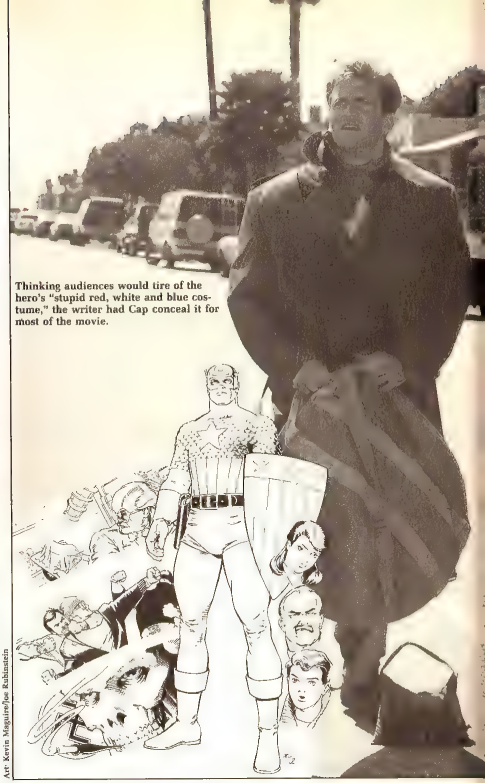
"*Who* are these movies for? There was stuff for adults in *Batman*. A big turning point in the story is Steve watching a videotape of Martin Luther King and it turns him. He learns that the Red Skull was responsible for the assasinations of King, John F. Kennedy and John Lennon. That just doesn't seem the stuff of a superhero movie.

"I heard that after the screening I saw, Menahem pulled off the movie's last 30 minutes, put another half-million into it and shot a completely new ending. Basically, the new ending takes out the piano and shows people being blown away. The way Menahem makes movies, when he changes something over here, he never realizes that it also affects something over there. That's why his movies are *incoherent*: he doesn't understand that A affects B affects C in a story."

Tolkin was enlisted as *Captain America's* writer in a circuitous way. "They [Cannon Pictures] made the movie *Invaders from Mars* and wanted me to rewrite that, but I couldn't because of other commitments. They needed a rewrite of *Masters of the Universe* and called me in. I wrote a rewrite they liked, but the director shot his draft anyway. They always saw me as the person 'If he had only done it, it would have been a hit!' They sent me a lot of stuff I wasn't interested in. Then, they sent me *Captain America*. I read the existing draft, which Lawrence Block wrote, and it had some good stuff. I got sparked and said yes."

One odd detail about the film and script is that Captain America is rarely in uniform. "I quite honestly thought, 'How long can we sit and look at this stupid red, white and blue costume?' " he declares. "All he can do in this outfit is run around, wave his arms and be a superhero. It gets boring after a while. Superman is Clark Kent a lot in *Superman*.

"I had him in the outfit only in act one, when he attacks the Red Skull, and again at the very end. What I had—which they didn't shoot because it was too expensive—was a scene where he's wearing a shirt and blue jeans over his uniform, and he's caught in a burning bus. He stays on the bus to convince somebody he's dead, and as the flames burn his clothes off, he stands there revealed in his uniform."



Thinking audiences would tire of the hero's "stupid red, white and blue costume," the writer had Cap conceal it for most of the movie.

Art: Kevin Maguire/Joe Rubinstein

For similar reasons, he altered the Red Skull's face. Now, it's quite normal (albeit with scars) after the film's first 20 minutes. "I wanted these people existing with power in the world. Menahem had a problem with that, too. He said he should have had the skull the whole time. And you know what?" the writer asks in a conspiratorial tone. "He might have been right! I was worried that the Skull would look like Skeletor in [Cannon's] *Masters of the Universe*! Skeletor looked so ridiculous with that completely pathetic makeup."

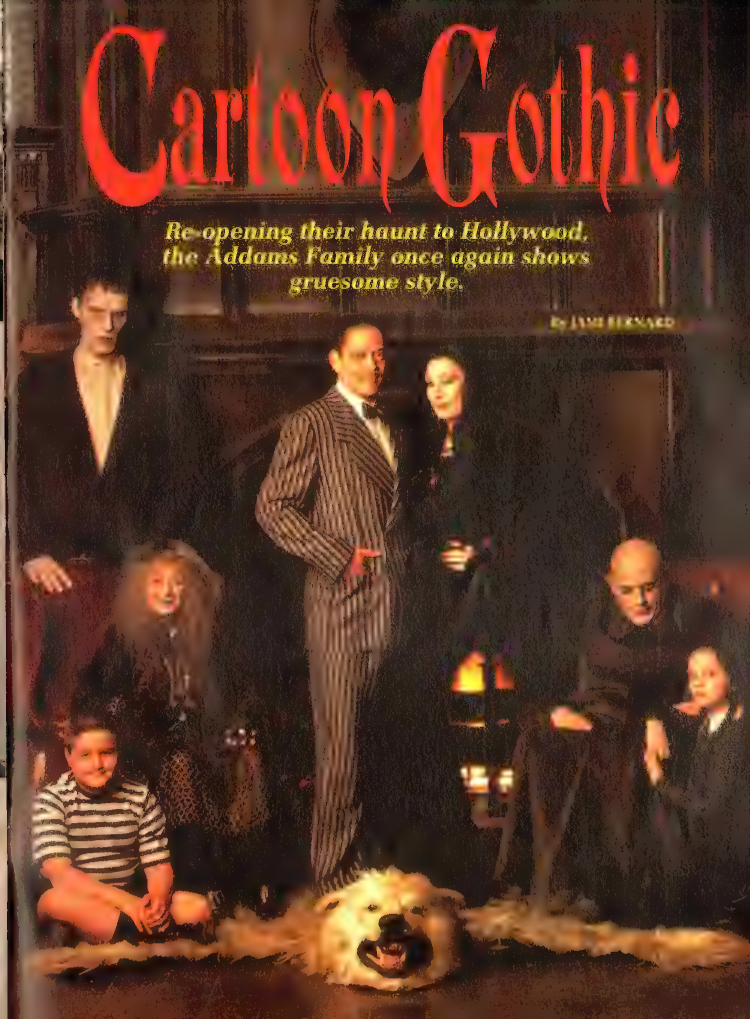
Tolkin doesn't know if the film will ever be released. A source at Columbia Pictures (who picked up distribution and video rights from 21st Century Productions, Cannon's successor) notes that "No release is forthcoming." The completed print is reportedly sitting on RCA/Columbia Home Video's shelves. Nonetheless, Tolkin is pleased that he "wrote a script people loved; not just Stan, but actors who would never appear in a movie of this budget, like Ned Beatty and Ronny Cox [STARLOG #157]. I

(continued on page 58)

Cartoon Gothic

Re-opening their haunt to Hollywood, the Addams Family once again shows gruesome style.

By JANE BERNARD



Thing's sleight-of—er—hand techniques make for an interesting chess match with Gomez (Raul Julia).

The movie opens with a bird's-eye view of a family pouring a cauldron of bubbling tar over their roof onto an angelic group of carolers. If that reminds you of a Charles Addams cartoon, it should—*The Addams Family* movie is going back to its roots for inspiration.

They're still creepy and they're kooky, mysterious and spooky, and altogether ooky—but this Addams Family lives in a different zip code from that *other* Addams Family, the one that was on TV for two seasons in the mid-60s. Although sophisticated for a sitcom, the TV version also contained broad jokes and silly situations. The movie version, due from Paramount Pictures this Christmas, is more urbane and character-oriented, even though you'll still find plenty of sight gags.

Carel Struycken is all keyed up to play Lurch, *The Addams Family*'s servant.

The names remain the same, including the family name, an homage to the late cartoonist whose ghoulish, offbeat characters, perhaps a precursor to Gary Larson's *The Far Side*, graced the pages of *The New Yorker* for decades. The TV show gave some of those characters names that even today, 25 years later, conjure certain images: Morticia, with a tight black dress and hair and nails so long they look like those of a corpse, still growing after death; Gomez, the dashing, mustachioed, congenial head of the family; the children Pugsley and Wednesday, tiny horror shows whose choice of house pets would never be approved by a modern co-op board; the zombie-eyed butler Lurch, who specializes in playing dirges on the organ; plus hairy Cousin It and the disembodied hand called Thing. They're all back for the movie, same names, different actors.

Anjelica (*The Witches*) Huston, who already looks like she's of nobility born, is playing Morticia, who devotes special care to her man-eating plant Cleo, even though she has many dead and withered plants to choose from in her solarium. Raul (*Presumed Innocent*) Julia plays the aristocratic but fun-loving Gomez, who in a different family might have gone in for polo, but whose hobbies as an Addams include smashing up toy trains and sparring with a full armory of sabres.

Carel (*Twin Peaks*) Struycken plays Lurch, and Christina (*Mermaids*) Ricci and Jimmy Workman play the tots. The big surprise, perhaps, is that ethereally skinny Christopher Lloyd portrays Fester, even though many people associate the role with TV's soft and round Jackie Coogan. "We suspected he was too thin for the role," admits director Barry Sonnenfeld. "We were thinking of more sort of round people. I talked to Danny DeVito"—Sonnenfeld had been the cameraman on DeVito's *Throw Momma from the Train*—"but he wasn't interested. We kept coming back to Chris, and finally shot tests with and without prosthetics. We tried rounder heads for him, but it looked like he had stepped off of the set of *Dick Tracy*. So, two days before shooting, we decided to shave his head and give him a fat suit."

In fact, comic actor Bruno Kirby, who met Sonnenfeld on *When Harry Met Sally...*, offered Lloyd the use of what Sonnenfeld calls Kirby's "Young Clemenza Fat Suit," the get-up he wore in *The Godfather Part II*.

The Addamses are delighted when Fester (Christopher Lloyd) returns—or does he?

There were other casting dilemmas to be worked out as well. Although Sonnenfeld and producer Scott Rudin knew from the start they wanted Huston and Julia in the leads, there was the Thing problem—casting someone whose hand would play the family retainer. In the TV show, Thing is always inside a special nail-studded box, delicately emerging only to answer the phone or brush Morticia's hair. "But our writers took Thing out of the box and we have him walk around the set," says Sonnenfeld. "Thing participates more. There's a great scene I haven't shot yet. It's going to be difficult, a traditional *Lassie Come Home* kind of situation, where Thing races for help and tries to hitchhike. He has to go cross-town to get help. Eventually, he hooks onto a passing bumper."

To make Thing do his thing, the filmmakers use special optical techniques to remove the rest of the actor's body from the shots. "We also have radio-controlled hands that run," says Sonnenfeld. But casting Thing meant sitting through dozens of magician acts, because Thing would probably do a coin trick or two to while away the time. "The problem is that magicians are trained to make jerky hand movements in order to fool the eye, and we wanted a more graceful Thing."

Sonnenfeld was sitting with the co-producer and the visual FX guy. "You think it has come to this?" asked Sonnenfeld. And they all nodded.

"It's going to be terrible!" he wailed, and again, they all nodded.

And then they all looked up in unison and mournfully wailed: "Mimes!"

So, a roomful of magicians gave way to a field of mimes. A mime field. "I swore that if any of them did one of those stuck-in-a-box jokes, I wasn't going to interview them," says Sonnenfeld.

But the mimes didn't work out, and they went back to that one magician who had potential, Christopher Hart. "His fingers are long and graceful, giving Thing a specific personality, a certain precision."

Producer Scott Rudin was probably destined to secure the movie rights from Charles Addams; as a child, he built a model of The Addams Family, "with a pop-up Morticia, a pop-up

Here's Charles Addams' cartoon Gothic originals.

Addams & Evil Art: Charles Addams/1965 Pocket Books edition

Thing uses Julia as a handrest while Barry Sonnenfeld discusses the scene.

A

For Morticia and Fester, it's a nice night for a stroll through the family cemetery.

Zoetrope Studios where Francis Coppola filmed *One From the Heart*, which helped make his studio go broke. Now the soundstages are for hire, and *The Addams Family* is occupying at least three of them. *The Main Event* and *Star 80* were also shot on Studio 3-8, two studios joined together for particularly large sets.

Now in Studio 3-8 there is the huge, forbidding facade of the mansion. Here is the courtyard where the carolers get tarred, here is the oversized arch that gains you entrance to the main hall. What you don't see on the set is the graveyard and water slide that bracket the property, or the family's 1932 Packard, which Lurch chauffeurs.

Inside, facing you, is a grand staircase that leads up half a flight, then splits off into two graceful, winding sets of stairs that each lead to the second floor bedrooms (which are really

is about focus, and the soundman thinks it's about that noise. And so, the production designer, Richard MacDonald, thinks it's about the British aristocracy."

MacDonald, a veteran designer of dozens of movies, including *The Russia House* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, was in charge of designing the forbidding, Gothic Addams house. "They really are aristocrats. It's not a matter of old money or new money, but *Addams* money, which is different. They are established beyond any criticism, just like aristocrats. They feel that what they do is right, the divine right of kings, so they have to live that way. If things are falling to pieces, they are maintaining what they need."

And so this is what a tour of *The Addams Family* set looks like:

The main set is on Studio 3-8 of Hollywood Center Studios, the former

Lurch (Struycken) has his hands full with one party guest.

All Other Addams Family Photos: Melinda Sue Gordon

A French-speaking Morticia always drives Gomez wild.

on another set entirely). If this were kept up, it could be Tara, but the Addamses are not big on home repair and there is bare wood, flaking plaster and huge water stains.

Off to the right of the entryway is the formal dining room; currently Gomez's elaborate train set is on the table, but that's just for storage until they shoot the scene elsewhere. In the corner, by the fireplace, is a heap of discarded crash-and-burn toy train parts. There is a McIntosh chair from Glasgow in the corner; it is tall, thin and looks like a torture device.

Beyond the dining room is Morticia's solarium, a greenhouse where nothing green grows. It houses a tangle of bare brown branches, gnarled and prickly. It is her collection of African violets and Venus flytraps, although her favorite, Cleo, is not on the set at the moment. Cleo comes in several different sizes, depending on

There's nothin' like having a good ol' bedtime story read by Uncle Fester (Lloyd). Next chapter? "Scabs!"

All Addams Family Photos Copyright 1991 Paramount Pictures

what's needed for the scene, and right now small Cleo is on a table elsewhere, a decoration for an upcoming reception that has nothing to do with the movie but, in the spirit of things, will feature all-black napkins, plates, forks and devil's food cake baked in the shape of the mansion itself.

To the left of the grand entryway is the Great Room, a long, drafty sitting room presided over by a huge moose head hung over the mantel. The two chintz couches by the fireplace look lived in, *really* lived in, as if they have supported many an Addams posterior over the centuries. Since Lurch tends to carry furniture from room to room, these couches are also replicated elsewhere in foam.

Lurch plays a real organ in a small room just beyond the sitting room; right now, there is a sign saying "Hot Set," meaning things are fully in place for a shoot and shouldn't be disturbed. A lighting console sits on a portable table near the old organ and seems totally out of place amongst the Addams family bric-a-brac.

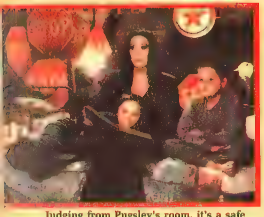
Production designer Richard MacDonald thinks Morticia and her family are "just like aristocrats."

Beyond Lurch's little den is a library, replete with secret passageway. Whole bookcases swivel at a touch to reveal that passageway, only one of several secret panels on the set. The sitting room, for example, has a panel that opens down to the dungeon, where Gomez sails along an underground stream in a gondola, and where he and his older brother Fester used to have a good old time in the Torture Room.

A seance table is sitting in the library, where Granny (Judith Malina) tries to discern where Fester has been for the past 25 years. In fact, the movie's plot hinges largely on Fester's return—is it the real Fester, who has been lost in the Bermuda Triangle, or is it a con man trying, like the unscrupulous lawyer (*Blood Simple*'s Dan Hedaya), to steal the Addams fortune? Is the proposal to set up a $2 million Fester Addams Foundation legit?

Other rooms on the ground floor of Chez Addams include Gomez's playroom, with a full-size hobby horse and a bristling collection of spears, and a portrait gallery, with full-length portraits of the Addams ancestors, who

According to Sonnenfeld, "The movie literally stops in its tracks," thanks to conductor Gomez.



Judging from Pugsley's room, it's a safe bet to say that there's a lot of traffic accidents in the Addams' neighborhood.

look strikingly like Raul Julia. "Film requires more detail than television," says designer MacDonald, who copied real masters when he created these in the Addamses' portrait gallery. "We gave an authenticity to them, a vague reality. I took various well-known paintings and put them together, did a rough sketch, had two scenic artists paint them, then we aged them down to make them look proper. You can't hire these out of a shop, and it was good employment for the artists. You have to make it look real, like the Addamses' reality, otherwise they would be running around like a bunch of freaks escaped from the circus."

On another soundstage is a huge set for the ballroom, where the movie's *piece de resistance* is soon to be filmed. It's roped off now so that workmen can put the finishing touches to the floor. MacDonald has painted two huge murals inside the ballroom, one of them full of romantic fairy tales painted 19th-century style, with a Morticia-like woman as Rapunzel, letting down her not very golden hair. The other mural shows "the collapse of civilization; it's rather charming," says MacDonald.

In this ballroom, 75 waif-like extras in special costumes will support the entire cast in "a gigantic production number where Raul breaks into a four-minute song, and it becomes like the Marx Brothers in *Duck Soup*," says Sonnenfeld. "The movie literally stops in its tracks, as Raul dances, flips Chris Lloyd 30 feet in the air, juggles knives. There's a point-of-view shot of the knife going down into Chris Lloyd's tonsils that will make studio executives cringe."

An insider assures us that Gomez and Fester will dance the "mamushka," a Cossack-like dance with swords. Betty Comden and Adolph Green wrote the lyrics.

Another set not seen here is the cobweb-covered kitchen, where Granny whips up strange concoctions—"You'll love it, eat the eyes first!" she coaxes.

On another soundstage a short walk away is the entire upstairs of the Addams mansion. There is a track running alongside the various bedrooms for the camera to roll on, making it tricky to get in and out of the rooms. The set is dark because there is no filming on this day, but even in the darkness, you can see the various traffic signs Pugsley has stolen to put up on his walls. (You'll hear the occasional crash outside during the movie as cars deprived of a Stop sign misjudge traffic conditions.)

Pugsley also has a floor-to-ceiling tank filled with sharks and piranhas, and a collection of dead stuffed animals on his dresser.

The Addamses have kept Fester's room exactly the way it was before he disappeared a quarter of a century ago, including the way he never made his bed. There are nefarious looking chemical sets and vials of potions connected to each other by silky cobwebs.

Because Sonnenfeld started as a cinematographer, he's happy to talk about *The Addams Family* in terms of lenses. "The nature of this film calls for a certain visual style," he explains. "Wide-angle lenses are always funnier than longer lenses, and longer lenses are more handsome, but this movie has to be more funny. *The Addams Family* screams out for wider lenses. Everyone thought I would go for a new, young cinematographer who I could push around, but I went with someone who was better than me, Owen Roizman, who shot *The French Connection* and *True Confessions*."

Unfortunately, Roizman had another assignment about halfway through his work on *Addams Family*, so half the movie will be shot by Gayle Tattersall.

As for dealing with the actors, which Sonnenfeld thought would be the hardest part of directing, "that hasn't been a problem. I've been lucky in that I've been immature and wacky enough as a person and a director that everyone seems to want to help me. Maybe we rehearsed a little more than Anjelica would have liked, or a little less than Raul would have liked, but it all worked out very well. I used to have an argument with Rob Reiner," for whom Sonnenfeld was cameraman on *When Harry Met Sally...* and *Misery*, "about how much of a director's job is done just by having a good cast. I say 95 percent. Rob says 97 percent. So, in casting this movie the way we have, I've already directed it."

The biggest problem, in fact, is "having to make hundreds of decisions a day that ultimately don't matter, but up to mattering a lot," says Barry Sonnenfeld. "Much of the day as a director, I say, 'OK, we'll take six of those book covers, and no, we won't see the backs of them, and no it should be green and not red,' and I answer millions of questions which are very important to everyone asking them. Every question has equal weight. Someone wants to know if he can park my car over there. Oftentimes, it doesn't matter what you say as long as—and this evidently is the secret to good directing—as long as you give an answer."

BY PAT JANKIEWICZ

KIETH

Burger King's loss was comics' gain when he sat down to draw.

In an industry driven as much by super-egos as superheroes, talent *and* humility are hard to find in one package. Comic book artist Sam Kieth is a refreshing combination of both. Still in shock that he can do what he loves for a living, the self-deprecating Kieth entered comics "when I learned the world didn't need another mediocre guitarist! It was either this or Burger King."

Happily, the artist drew *ALIENS: Earth War* instead of flipping Whoppers or bagging fries. The third installment of Dark Horse Comics' bestselling *ALIENS* series "put me on the map, *if* I am on the map," he laughs. "I was talking to [publisher] Mike Richardson at Dark Horse, and he was very enthusiastic in suggesting if I had any houses I wanted to buy, that an *ALIENS* mini-series might do the job. I didn't believe him, but it was the truth."

To capture the look of the blockbuster films, he used them as reference. "Oh, man, I *hate* those movies," he moans. "I had to look at those movies so many times and freeze-frame 'em! I can never look at an *ALIEN* movie again! The first *ALIEN* is ruined for me. Somebody stole my VCR and the *ALIEN* cassette inside it, and I didn't even *care*!"

While the mini-series was a direct sequel to the films, Sigourney Weaver wasn't "in my version and couldn't be," Kieth reveals. "Legally, 20th Century Fox would have had to pay Sigourney Weaver to use her likeness in the third series. So, in the first two series, people were clamoring for Ripley to come back, and there was an expectation that she would look like Sigourney Weaver.

"Dark Horse told me specifically, 'We don't want to pay Sigourney Weaver a bunch of money—we can't afford to, we're not interested, so *don't* do it. Draw her to look like anything but a middle-aged woman.' I didn't even achieve that," he laughs. "She barely looked female with me drawing it!"

Kieth's approach to the creatures drew more from *The Vault of Horror* than Ridley Scott. "*ALIENS* was just a monster book like *Sandman*, so I tried to do something really different," he explains. "People were alarmed that I was trying to make their *ALIENS* book look like an EC

The artist entered comics because "it was either this or Burger King." Photo: Lisa Orris

***ALIENS: Earth War* artist Sam Kieth could "never look at an *ALIEN* movie again" after completing the mini-series.**

comic. They kept telling me it wasn't appropriate and that it should look like the movie, not an EC comic! Fans were amazed that I tried to be realistic and cartoony in the same story. I treated the whole thing as a black-and-white comic, almost as if it would be better served by being published in black-and-white.

"In the beginning, my favorite part of doing the book was [drawing] the Aliens themselves. Towards the end, it was the women," he remarks. "The focus shifted, which meant that I had fewer *ALIENS* visual art pages to sell to dealers and lots of pages of women nobody wanted to buy!"

Kieth found dealing with 20th Century Fox to be far more terrifying than the Aliens. "Working with Dark Horse is great, but 20th Century Fox is much less lenient. They tend to make changes without consulting anybody, and when they decide something's gonna happen, it's gonna happen. It was like working for DuPont or any other corporation: you don't have *any* control over what happens. The people at Dark Horse were nice about being between Fox and the artist."

The artist shudders in mock anguish at some of Fox's antics. "They made odd changes. They shaved off all the womens' hips, making them look top-heavy," he laughs in disbelief. "If you're gonna shave off the hips, let's take the breasts, too, so I don't look breast-infatuated! Our editor, Diana Schutz, tried to argue with them endlessly about it, but they had their own ideas."

His feelings on *ALIENS: Earth War* are mixed. "I liked it because I liked drawing a gooey monster. When the series was most like the movies, it reminded me that, in some small way, I was involved with the movies. It was fun to design a new Alien for the comic and that John Bolton helped design what I drew.

"It was fun overall, but we could have done such a better job if there had been certain things: More time, the system..." he adds. "I'm not blaming anybody, but Kelley Jones is doing a new *ALIENS* series, and it looks like he's going to have the time and preparation necessary to make it look nice."

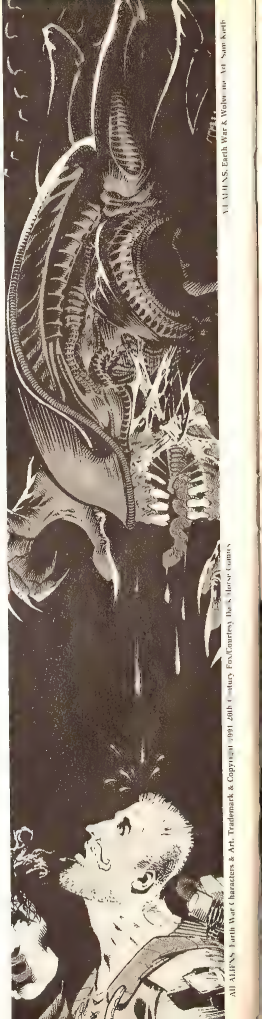
In the meantime, Kieth has cut loose on his new "Wolverine: Blood Hungry" mini-series for *Marvel Comics Presents*. "I basically feel that the difference between doing something like Wolverine and *ALIENS* is that the fans of *ALIENS* are movie fans who happen to read comics. If I get in the way of their version of the movie, then I better get out of their way. When I'm working on Wolverine, I'm not worried if I'm cartoony or realistic, and Marvel hasn't made any predispositions.

"Wolverine fans are only interested in a really cool version of the character," Kieth remarks. "He can look different; he just has to look like Clint Eastwood, Canadian and with an attitude. It doesn't even matter if you draw him incorrectly, because there are so many different versions. With Wolverine, it has been purely, 'Let's go for an exciting splash page of Wolverine,' because you have eight pages and not many chances. You want to be exciting and tell a story."

The illustrator was impressed by the project's history. "When I went to work for Marvel, everybody was doing the regular books. The only thing they had was this story that Todd McFarlane was supposed to do for *Marvel Comics Presents*, where he redesigns Wolverine's costume. I guess Marvel—for whatever reason—decided not to go with the designs, so McFarlane backed out.

"Then, they asked me if I wanted to do it at the last minute. So, I had to fill Todd McFarlane's shoes, and the story takes place right after Barry Windsor Smith's "Weapon X" [*CS* #18] ends! I have to follow him, too! I felt that everybody around me was very tall and I was a midget!"

"Fans were amazed that I tried to be realistic and cartoony in the same story," notes Kieth.



All ALIENS Earth War characters & Art, Trademark & Copyright ©1991 20th Century Fox. Courtesy Dark Horse Comics

Replacing Todd McFarlane on "Blood Hungry" and following Barry Windsor Smith's "Weapon X" made Kieth feel like a midget around big-name artists.

Now, however, Kieth is a midget with a regular title. "After doing *ALIENS*, the thing that hurt me most was that I'm not in the same place all of the time. So, the good thing about this eight-part story is that it will give me a chance to be in the same place, and if people like me, they can pick up eight pages of art every two weeks. It will hopefully grow and build from there. On the other hand," he warns, "if you *don't* like my art, that's what you avoid!

"They offered me a Ghost Rider story after that in the same spot. As a kid, I liked the character [the original Ghost Rider] who used to ride around on the old Easy Rider chopper bike, but now they've got him on an *Akira*-like bike."

Why did the artist want to do a Wolverine story? "Not to knock on the guys who do the mutant books, but many of them, like me, did it because the character is popular. I'm a fool; I happen to like Wolverine, Hulk and Dr. Strange. Put the three of them in a mini-series, send me off and I'll be back in four years.

"I don't care much for Punisher or any of the mutants today. They have these characters which kids come up with nowadays with all sorts of weird names. I sound old," the 28-year old artist laughs. " 'These kids today, they have no respect for mutants the way we did!' "

Kieth's style of art, a cross between realism and caricature, is inspired by a variety of sources. "My work is very pop-influenced. My influences include Frank Frazetta, Al Williamson, Arthur Sudyam, Berni Wrightson and ones whom nobody ever owns up to, like Sal and John Buscema, Don Heck, Ross Andru and Ernie Chan. I love them, but you'll be damned if you ever hear them mentioned as influences," says Kieth. "These guys are ignored and taken for granted by mainstream comics."

One of Kieth's favorite assignments was a one-shot story for *The Incredible Hulk*. "It was the perfect experience," he smiles. "I hadn't done any work for Marvel, and I got to walk in and do my favorite character for one issue. I did #368, and that one issue got me all this work at Marvel. I have people coming up to me a year later saying how much they liked it.

Kieth didn't worry about being cartoony or realistic with Wolverine's "Blood Hungry" storyline in *Marvel Comics Presents*.

MY DAUGHTER, IT WAS TAKEN A COUPLE OF WEEKS BEFORE I REPORTED ABOARD THE NOSTROMO.
SHE-- SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL
I SPENT HER WHOLE LIFE DRIFTING THROUGH EMPTY SPACE--LOST IN YEARS OF PERFECT HIBERNATION, WHILE SHE GREW OLD AND DIED.
THEN I LOOK AT MY LITTLE GIRL.
AND I KNOW.
THE ALIEN STOLE THE TIME WE SHOULD HAVE HAD TOGETHER
SOMETIMES I THINK THOSE THINGS HAVE AS MUCH RIGHT TO SURVIVE AS ANY OF US. SOMETIMES I WONDER WHAT GIVES US THE ARROGANCE TO CHALLENGE THEIR EXISTENCE.
YEAH, THE PSYCHS WERE CONCERNED WHEN I DIDN'T SHOW AN "OVERT EMOTIONAL RESPONSE" TO HER DEATH-- BUT WHY SHOULD I? THE OLD WOMAN IN THEIR FILES WAS A STRANGER TO ME.

All Wolverine Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1993 Marvel Entertainment Group

Ripley returned in *ALIENS: Earth War* but not as Sigourney Weaver.

"Wolverine can look different," says Kieth. "He has to look like Clint Eastwood, Canadian and with an attitude."

"It was great—I worked on it with Kelley Jones and we jammed on it over a two-day period. I came to his house with layouts, and he had to ink them. I shouldn't do that," Kieth admits. "I go to my friends' houses saying, 'This isn't finished yet!' "

While the story of the Hulk's violent discussion with Mr. Hyde was a *noirish*, atmospheric portrayal of the character, Kieth wanted greener pastures, and greener Hulks.

"[The grey Hulk was] dark and mysterious, as opposed to the usual, primary-colored Marvel fare, but I really wished I could have drawn the green Hulk I remember from when I was a kid," he says wistfully.

"I even asked [*Hulk* writer] Peter David for a green Hulk," Kieth chuckles. "He said, 'I'm not about to write a stupid character for one issue so you can have the color green. Pretend he's green when you ink him!' He doesn't like the green Hulk. It was only after much protesting in the letter pages that Peter finally decided to bring back the green Hulk."

The illustrator is currently embarking on another adventure with Peter David and the jade-again giant. "I've got to start painting a two-issue Prestige Format Hulk series. So far, it's called 'Days of Future,' or 'Future Days of Past,' some *Star Trek* rip-off title!" he jokes. "Peter hasn't named it, but it has been pending for a year now.

"I really like Peter's writing on it, and [current *Hulk* artist] Dale Keown's great. As a kid, I would much rather have seen him on it than me," he admits. "I would have *hated* my Hulk! My Hulk had a lot of shadows, and as a kid, I hated shadows! I would want John Byrne! If it wasn't John Byrne, take it out of my sight!"

One book Kieth drew won him a trip to Mega-City One. "Alan Grant liked my Batman story ["The Killing Peck," *Secret Origins* #1] and said he wanted to work with me. He kept bugging his editors at DC, who kept ignoring him. Finally, he said to me, 'You've got to do a Judge Dredd story!' It sounded great, but how would we do that? He said, 'I can strong-arm the editors!' Great! He called them up and said, 'Sam's doing a Judge Dredd story, they said 'OK, Mr. Grant!' so I'm going to paint a 10-

(continued on page 50)

For Whom the Belle Tolls

By KYLE COUNTS

Appearances can be deceiving. Cases in point: Kirk Wise and Gary Trousdale, directors of the forthcoming *Beauty & the Beast*, the Walt Disney Studio's 30th full-length animated feature. They have only three months to put the finishing touches on this musicalized fairy tale—"very loosely based" on the 18th century story, according to a studio press release—yet, judging by their casual attire, you would think they were about to embark upon an afternoon of four-wheeling in Wise's Suzuki jeep.

Wise, 28, is clad in sneakers, shorts and a sweater; the bearded Trousdale, 31, sports green camouflage pants and a T-shirt, his long hair topped off by a visor cap. As soon as this interview is over, the two will return to the business at hand: Attending to the numerous post-production details that must be completed before the film's November 22 opening. They may not look as though they're falling apart at the seams, but upon listening to them relate their experiences in making *Beauty & the Beast*, one gets the impression that they're still knee-deep in 12-hour days.

First, they point out, frequently cutting each other off in mid-sentence, their *Beauty & the Beast* is decidedly different from the one originally envisioned by Disney studio chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg.

"We had always intended Gaston to be larger than life," co-director Kirk Wise says. Andreas Deja animated the character.

For Kirk Wise and Gary Trousdale, directing "Beauty & the Beast" meant following in some pretty fishy footsteps.

"It wasn't originally designed as a musical," Wise explains. "Dick and Jill Purdum, the original directors, did a ton of pre-production work that was all very pretty—"

"And Linda [Woolverton] wrote a script, too, that Jeffrey [Katzenberg] looked at and said, 'Great, don't change a word,' " Trousdale adds. "They did a story reel of it and—"

"The artistic style," Wise continues, "combined with the story's direction at that point, it was very formal and stilted—"

"Kind of cool," Trousdale says.

Wise notes. "It sort of felt like an animated *Masterpiece Theatre*."

"It was kind of dull," Trousdale announces.

The story reel that the Purdums

Belle was modernized "a little," co-director Gary Trousdale notes. "We tried to make her a little less of a shy flower."

Cecil" soccermania TV special later animating for *The Great Mouse Detective* and spending two years on *The Brave Little Toaster* and "Family Dog" (the *Amazing Stories* segment) as an animator and storyboard artist.

Trousdale donned his mouse ears during the "panic hiring" phase of *The Black Cauldron* (STARLOK #11), joining the ranks of the studio's P.A. department (he also did in-betweening and cleaning). He worked on the stories for *Oliver & Company*, *The Little Mermaid* and *Rescuers Down Under*, before moving into development on "Aaron's Dream" and "Goldilocks Continues." He also did storyboard work on Disney's *Mr. Science Project*.

had put together was not "antagonized by a heavy beauty. What he wanted was a heavy beast," Wise recalls. "And that's why he was cast. It was very interesting to look at Paul [Carlson], the animator of Lumiere, and some of the things that you associate with some of the better Disney characters. The solution at the time came when we realized they had taken a wrong turn and were trying to bring in Howard Ashman to musicalize it.

"Besides the fact that Howard was a great lyricist, he had a really good story and character sense," says Trousdale of the late songwriter. Adds Wise, "He had an enormous affection for the old animated films as we did. Along with his songwriting talent and his understanding of story, somehow he brought with him that sense of affection for what makes Disney films what they are."

The new story direction in place, the Purdums packed their bags and returned to England, while Ashman and writer Woolverton began creating a new story outline. The question remained: Who would assume the directorial reins? Enter Wise and Trousdale, who had just come off directing "Cranium Command," a multi-minute animated piece for EPCOT Center's World of Wonders pavilion about the effects of booze on the human body.

"It was in the Les Wood days," Trousdale admits. "We weren't the first choice."

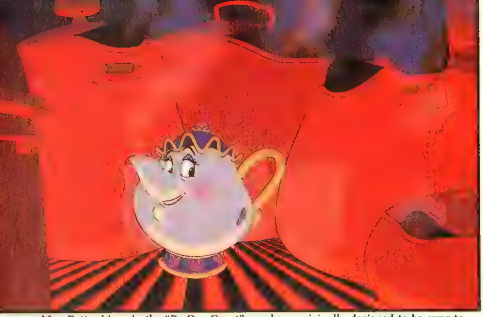
"The timing was right," Wise says. "There's a lot of truth to being in the right place at the right time. We became directors in absentia [in December 1989] because someone had to go to New York where they were doing most of this work, and push the project to a specific direction."

Did they retain any of the Purdum story ideas? "I was given a list of things," explains Wise. "There are a few things from [the Purdums'] sequences that were storyboarded like in the end fight—that we ended up keeping but it was headed in such a radically different direction. I believe that's one of the reasons why Nick Purdum eventually left the project. It became more and more obvious that he was no longer making the film that he had agreed to make. It would have been creative suicide for him to try to do something he didn't feel passionately about."

Wise and Trousdale met while attending the California Institute of the Arts—Wise was a freshman, Trousdale a junior. Their "Cranium Command" partnership came about "through circumstance," according to Wise. "We both happened to be in the story department at Disney's at the same time—we had worked on many of the same projects [including *Oliver & Company* and *Rescuers Down Under*], but never as a team."

The pair came to the studio via very different routes. Wise did freelance animation during his fourth year at CalArts for Disney's "Sport

Beauty, Belle (animated by James Baxter), finds her Beast (animated by Glen Keane).



Mrs. Potts shines in the "Be Our Guest" number—originally designed to be sung to Belle's father, *not* the Beauty.

"We both come from a story background," says Trousdale. "That's pretty much where our main strengths lie. We both lean towards gaggy, funny stuff—God knows why they gave us *Beauty & the Beast*. It has some funny stuff in it, but it's more of an emotional picture."

Wise agrees that it was "definitely a challenge to take the creative reins of this picture, which had to be a very moving love story first, yet at the same time be imbued with all the entertainment value and fun you would expect from a Disney picture. It certainly was off-typecasting to put me and Gary in this position."

As a team, their M.O. is quite different from that employed by John Musker and Ron Clements, directors of *The Little Mermaid*, who divided the film's sequences among themselves. "We don't work that way," Wise relates. "We tend to collaborate a great deal. There was a great deal of overlap in the division of duties. Neither of us felt that any one area was one particular person's turf."

Solving disagreements as a team meant calling in an objective third party, but problem-solving began, in Wise's words, "with listening to each other and taking our objections seriously. Sometimes, we would have somebody mediate; we could talk either to Brian [McEntee], our art director, or [storyman] Roger Allers, who's also a good mediator. They might lean one way or another, which would sway us in one direction. It kept us from having pointless arguments."

Being first-time feature directors, the duo felt it was critical to lean on their staff of experienced animation pros—people like Glen Keane [CS #22], James Baxter and Andreas Dejas. "We relegated a lot of the responsibility, particularly in terms of animation, to the directing animators," notes Trousdale. "Kirk has worked in animation more than me, but not for so long that he got to be great."

"We both were trained in animation and understand animation and can speak the language, but we have unbelievably skilled animators here, like Glen, Andreas and James—the list goes on and on—who are much better at that than we are," chimes in Wise. "So, the directing animators took the lead on the characters. They worked as troubleshooters; their job was not only to animate their own footage and make their characters come to life, but also to make sure that the work by the [supporting] animators was rising to the occasion."

"It was a method the animators weren't used to," continues Trousdale, "and I guess it made some of them a little uncomfortable. Most of the [previous Disney feature directors] have been animators and could pinpoint what was wrong with the scene they were working on, go over it and improve it. We didn't do that."

Adds Wise, "We could criticize the timing, we could criticize whether or not the idea was coming across, be it an emotional scene or a funny scene. But when it came down to, 'OK, how is this scene going to be fixed, which drawings should we pull, which drawings should we go over?' sometimes we would rely on our directing animators to provide the concrete, nuts-and-bolts direction."

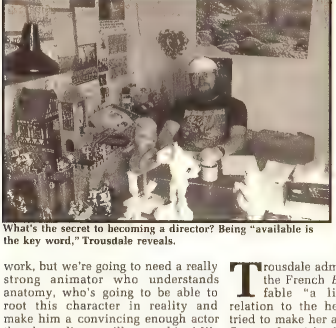
Assigning an animator to a particular character isn't unlike casting the right actor or actress in a given role. For Wise and Trousdale, it was a matter of assessing each artist's strengths and then marrying them with the appropriate character.

"Animators definitely have preferences as to which character they *want* to work on," Trousdale explains. "Sometimes they get what they want, sometimes they don't. As far as *Beauty & the Beast*, Glen wanted to do the Beast [voiced by Robby Benson], and we knew he could do a great Beast. Andreas wanted to do Belle [Paige O'Hara]; we thought, for a number of reasons, that James would be better as Belle and Andreas would be better cast as Gaston [Richard White]."

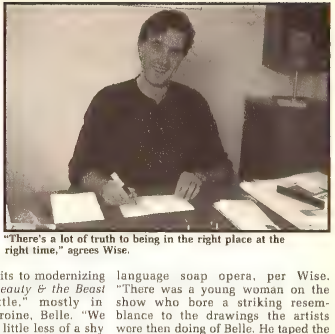
Problems with "upper management" related to Gaston's characterization served to convince the two they had made the right decision in assigning him to Dejas. "We had always intended Gaston to be a larger-than-life, broad, sort of comically macho character," Wise reveals. "We kept getting messages that he was much too broad, he wasn't believable and that it wasn't going to work. And we said, 'Well, we feel the character is going to

On hand to enliven the proceedings are enchanted servants Lumiere (voiced by Jerry Orbach). Mrs. Potts (Angela Lansbury) and Cogsworth (David Ogden Stiers).

All Beauty & the Beast Photos & Art: Copyright 1991 The Walt Disney Company



What's the secret to becoming a director? Being "available is the key word," Trousdale reveals.



"There's a lot of truth to being in the right place at the right time," agrees Wise.

work, but we're going to need a really strong animator who understands anatomy, who's going to be able to root this character in reality and make him a convincing enough actor that the audience will accept him.' We felt that Andreas would really be able to fill that bill, because he draws so solidly and his acting is terrific.

"James Baxter is a tremendously talented animator whose stuff has an amazingly fluid, graceful, quality. He seemed like a perfect choice for Belle. Some people can work for years and years and years, trying to achieve what James seems to achieve without batting an eye. It's beautiful work. I wish we could have gotten even more of it on screen, but there was only so much of him to go around."

Wise praises art director Brian McEntee for creating a "beautiful, very lush look for the film that harks back to many earlier Disney films like *Bambi* and *Pinocchio*. The inspiration he worked from was the paintings from the French Romantic period. He wanted to capture their soft, light-filled look."

The thought of topping *The Little Mermaid* was, at first, "paralyzing" to the team. Wise remembers witnessing the first ripples of that film's future landslide success. "I was working in development at that time, and *Mermaid* was in production. I saw the story reels at a couple of different phases, and I knew it was going to be terrific. Finally, I saw the finished project—and I loved it. Here was this movie that basically put Disney animation back on the map. Of course that's intimidating!

"But, the one thing we thought encouraging was that many of the key creative players from *Mermaid* were going to be working with us on *Beauty & the Beast*—specifically, Howard and Alan [Menken] and many of the story people: Roger Allers, Brenda Chapman and quite a few others. So, it took a little bit of the fear away."

Trousdale admits to modernizing the French *Beauty & the Beast* fable "a little," mostly in relation to the heroine, Belle. "We tried to make her a little less of a shy flower of a girl who goes where her father wishes, and tried to give her a little more of a backbone," he says.

Unlike many Disney heroines who dream of being swept away by bland-looking princely knights on charming white horses, living for love is not Belle's focus, Wise points out. "We were very concerned about that, as was Linda Woolverton, who wanted to stay away from making Belle a girl who only wants a man in her life. We wanted to concentrate on Belle's love of fairy tales being a grander love of adventure. I think anyone can relate to growing up in a small town and wondering, 'What's beyond this? There has to be more'—like growing up in Kansas and wanting to go to New York."

Belle's final design, Wise continues, is the work of a "combination of many different people. We were trying to go for sort of a European look when we were working on designs for her. We wanted to give her a fuller face and an overall softer look that would match the soft and lush look of the backgrounds. We wanted to also make her pretty, but in a different way than Ariel. Ariel had an American teenager, Christie Brinkley kind of a look; with Belle, we went for a look that was more along the lines of a Vivien Leigh or Judy Garland."

The character evolved out of sketches by storyboard artists Chris Sanders and Tom Ellery, who came up with drawings of Belle that were "really close" to what Wise and Trousdale had in mind. Producer Don Hahn "plastered his walls with photographs of a zillion different types of beautiful girls so he could be inspired by that," while McEntee found his inspiration while watching a Spanish-language soap opera, per Wise. "There was a young woman on the show who bore a striking resemblance to the drawings the artists were then doing of Belle. He taped the show and gave it to James Baxter, who ended up photocopying some images off the tape and surrounding his desk with them as reference."

Trousdale also shot live-action reference footage using the same model—Sherri Lynn Stoner—who stood in for Ariel during pre-production of *The Little Mermaid*. For added authenticity, the actress was given a basket with a book in it and was gowned in what Wise calls a "flowing peasant dress."

"But we specifically instructed her to come up with a whole different set of mannerisms and expressions and gestures that would be unique to Belle and wouldn't be associated with Ariel. Sherri came up with many good bits of business that the animators were able to incorporate into their work."

There are always problems that surface during a film's making; for Wise and Trousdale it was the film's musical centerpiece, "Be Our Guest," described by Wise as "Esther Williams meets Busby Berkeley meets Julia Child." The tune, which involves a chorus of dancing dinnerware, was originally intended to be sung to Belle's father, Maurice (Rex Everhart).

Sixty feet of the animation had been completed when the directors screened the song-in-progress for Katzenberg and some *B&B* staff members for troubleshooting purposes. Something about the sequence wasn't jelling, and Wise and Trousdale knew it. "One of our story guys, Bruce Woodside, raised his hand after the screening and said, 'You know what I think the problem is? 'Be Our Guest' is being sung to the *wrong* person,' re-

(continued on page 50)

Beast

(continued from page 49)

calls Wise. "Suddenly, it got totally silent in the theater. He says, 'Yeah, I think it should be sung to Belle!' Gary and I are sitting there, looking at each other, sweat dripping off our brows, knowing full well that in the building across the street [at Disney animation headquarters], work on the sequence is just humming away."

Changing the tune at that stage of production resulted in a "tremendous domino effect," says Wise. "We ended up revising many sequences to accommodate a new spot for 'Be Our Guest.' We also had the embarrassing problem of a gender change, since the song was originally being sung to a man. It made use of all these masculine pronouns. We thought, 'Great, now what are we going to do?' "

The solution was to have Howard Ashman feminize the song ("You would never guess in a million years it was once sung to a funny little old man," Wise laughs). They brought in the principal singers (Jerry Orbach as Lumiere, the candelabra; David Odgen Stiers as Cogsworth, the mantle clock; and Angela Lansbury as a perky teapot named Mrs. Potts) and had them loop the changes into the song, which had already been recorded. Headphones in place, the actors would sing the word to be substituted—say, "cherie" for "monsieur"—leaving the sound man to seamlessly drop the new words into the original mix.

"At the time," Trousdale says, "they told us we had to have 'Be Our Guest' in color by Christmas [1990]. We just finished it last week [August 1991]."

"We *did* get it done by Christmas," Wise adds, "but I don't think it was the Christmas they had in mind."

Now, they're in the home stretch of production, with cleanup and FX soon to wrap, followed by final scoring, dialogue pickups and color correction. "We're already starting to cut negative," Trousdale adds enthusiastically. "We thought we would be able to cut back [our hours], but it's *not* working out that way. Things keep popping up."

With the expectations for *Beauty & the Beast* running high, one could say that Kirk Wise and Gary Trousdale are feeling a bit of peer pressure. But they refuse to be intimidated by words like "classic." "We sure hope it's another *Little Mermaid*," says Kirk Wise. "Nothing would be finer. We're constantly crossing our fingers and knocking on wood that it will be. But at the same time, we hope *Beauty & the Beast* can succeed on its own merits."

Aquaman

(continued from page 12)

Aquaman. This *is* Aquaman. We're just looking at him from another direction. We're taking a different path from what has been done before. The hard thing was: Where is he coming from today? And to know you have to look at all of the past issues. I reread a lot of it, especially the Steve Skeates/Giordano issues, which in my mind are just some of the neatest comics that came out in the '60s."

McLaughlin also had ready advice from past *Aquaman* alumni.

"One of the series' previous writers is now the VP at DC. Paul Levitz wrote the character for a long time, and since the proposal goes across his desk, I figured he wouldn't be shy about saying how he felt. The other person the proposal went across to was editor-in-chief Dick Giordano, who used to be *Aquaman*'s editor. Once again, he wasn't shy."

McLaughlin admits to using many resources while working on the series, including pulling from his acting experiences.

"I'm constantly wandering around the apartment mumbling lines and acting out little scenes, which frightens the hell out of my fiancée [recently made Mrs. Shaun McLaughlin]. I even do character sketches, like I do when I'm acting," he admits.

"When we were very early in the proposal stages, we were talking about how he would move through the water. I had been a swimmer in high school, I swam four years straight until my brain was waterlogged. I've given Ken copious notes on how I think Aquaman should move. One night I actually went down to the pool in the building, went underwater and tried different ways to swim and still stay underwater."

Whatever awaits Aquaman, and Shaun McLaughlin himself, he plans to be there with Ken Hooper and Kevin Dooley to see the future through.

"I hope it'll go for a long time. I've got the first year plotted out in my mind. We have a lot of ideas and many things we want to do with Aquaman. He has become very important to all of us.

"Kevin and I are working on a proposal for another DC character we're looking at for revival. I would like to do much more work. I just quit my day job. We're really excited about the series. This is something I've worked very hard on, harder than anything in my whole life. I just want to make sure that *Aquaman*'s right, good, entertaining and thought-provoking. We hope to give the fans what they want, but give it to them with a twist."

Kieth

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page story for *Judge Dredd: The MegaZine*."

Some might find drawing Dredd an imposing task. "It *is* intimidating," Kieth admits. "Many good people have worked on Judge Dredd. I called up Brian Bolland [for advice] and said, 'This is your thing.' He said, 'No, no, it's not *my* thing; you should make it *your* thing.' He tried to convince me to do that."

Kieth is very enthusiastic about *Dredd* writer Alan Grant (CS #16-17). "I feel more comfortable talking to Alan about comics than anyone else. He's trying to finagle me into doing a *Lobo* series. He's quiet and congenial (Grant, not Lobo), but he also likes to fool around—the perfect combination in a guy and a friend.

"It's fun to send the phone bills into DC and say, 'Hi, could you pay for this? Alan and I were discussing the *Lobo* series that we haven't even signed to do yet!' DC always tells me, 'No, and we're not going to give you any more paper to draw Marvel comics with!'

"I was using DC paper to draw Marvel," he explains, "because I don't like Marvel's paper. It's too slick! I called up DC and asked for more paper. They said, 'You're not doing anything for us now, are you?' 'Well, no.' 'Then what do you need the paper for?' I answered, 'The *Lobo* series?' 'You're not even signed for that yet!' I guess I'm gonna have to go out and buy paper."

Another writer Kieth finds interesting to talk to is *Sandman* scribe Neil Gaiman, whom he describes as enigmatic. "Neil likes people to think he's mysterious, and, as far as I can tell, he is! I've talked to him many times and I'm still baffled by some of our conversations," he says fondly. "Basically, he's a really polite guy and I think he would just like to tell a really good story.

"He sees the artist as a way to get that done, in the same tradition as Alan Moore," he continues. "Neil's more of a storyteller than a co-plotter; he guides the whole thing himself. Most of the artists he has worked for have been under his guidance. As an artist, that's no fun, but as a reader and writer, it's what the book needs."

As to what Sam Kieth needs, his future looks bright, if somewhat cluttered. "After Wolverine, I'll be doing Ghost Rider in its place, two painted, 48-page Godawful long Hulk stories, and Judge Dredd should pop up soon. And if that doesn't keep me busy," he says, crossing his fingers, "if I can do *Lobo* without Tom DeFalco cutting off my testicles, we're set!"

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Protectors

(continued from page 20)

public knowledge, so the villains *know* the heroes won't use deadly force. That causes our heroes to question [the charter] and to look for other ways of defeating the villains."

Other Centaur characters making cameo appearances in the series include the Eye, who plays a pivotal role down the road, Jones says. Although he looked like a giant floating eyeball in the original Centaur issues, he'll now be a human.

Also making an appearance is the Arrow, an archer who predates Green Arrow. "He isn't a member of the team, and we'll see why," Jones hints. Series Editor Chris Ulm reports that the Arrow is already set to star in the first solo story planned, penned by Richard Mann, with art by Samuel Clarke Hawbaker.

Some characters will undoubtedly become more popular than others," says Jones. "That's just the nature of comics—it's expected. I have the first options on any solo series. A universe concept like this isn't usually attempted by an independent company on a large scale. If there are spin-offs that I don't choose to do myself, I'll act as a consultant, with input on all projects.

"There are many comics readers who are too young to remember or know the start of the DC or Marvel Universes, but they can get in on the ground floor of the Malibu Universe," he adds. "It hasn't really been discussed, but I would prefer to do an ongoing monthly series as opposed to a mini-series, although that probably would be better commercially."

The writer's research has supplied him with enough ideas for future stories, including flashbacks to the 1940s. *The Protectors*' first issue features a one-page flashback to that time period, and Jones hopes it won't be the last.

"I'm not going into origins, since there are *so many* characters to deal with; we can always explore those later if this all works out. I'm not taking a long-term look at sequels and spin-offs. Hopefully, we'll get a chance to explore these characters as fully as possible. Six issues is just enough to introduce them, and that's about it."

R.A. Jones hints that if *The Protectors* is successful, further exploration of the Centaur heroes is possible. "There are two dozen other Centaur characters available to us," he says, "so there is potential for *lots* of spin-offs."

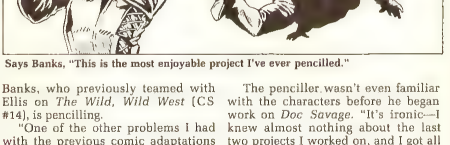
Savage

(continued from page 16)

"There's a scene where Doc tells his friends that he has really had enough, and he wants to quit. All of them are thunderstruck, and Renny says, 'Holy cow, Doc, we thought you were having fun!' Doc says, 'Well, I've had enough fun.' "

Issue #2 has a cover by Doug (*Jonny Quest*) Wildey, while the other three covers are by Brian Stelfreeze. Inks are by Robert Lewis and colors by Deirdre DeLay. Darryl [accumulated] over a long period of time, so I figured if I wasn't true to them, I would pay the price!" Banks exclaims. "So, I tried to make them as close as possible, so that those who know *Doc Savage* will say, 'This is how I pictured them.'

"This is the most enjoyable project I've ever pencilled, bar none, because there are so many interesting things about it—the era, the art deco architecture—and Doc Savage is probably the most imitated concept out there. He's not a Punisher or Wolverine hack-'em-up; he has a moral code and thinks of himself as a healer, and that's one thing I really love about him," says Banks.



Says Banks, "This is the most enjoyable project I've ever pencilled."

Banks, who previously teamed with Ellis on *The Wild, Wild West* (CS #14), is pencilling.

"One of the other problems I had with the previous comic adaptations was that Doc and his five men ended up looking very generic, homogenized white men. DC tried to give them different looks by giving moustaches to Ham and Monk when they never had them in the books—and a beard to Johnny. I don't understand why, because the way they're described in the books, they were all so oddball-looking anyway that you couldn't mix them up.

"So, I supplied Darryl with descriptions of the characters, and he came up with the definitive versions of what they're supposed to look like. For example, Long Tom is this little bitty runt with a bulging forehead, ears that stick out and two gold teeth in front—he had them in the books, but not the comics! For some reason, people always ended up giving Johnny's monocle to Ham, which I could never quite figure out. Johnny is this incredibly scholarly-looking stringbean! Renny has these really-truly mutant fists on him—they would say he has the biggest fists in the world, but when you would look at the artwork, you couldn't discern them. It may look strange, but these are truly a pair of tremendous paws!"

Banks says he tried to keep the characters as close to their original descriptions as possible, knowing that fans would be watching. "Doc Savage has many fans

The penciller wasn't even familiar with the characters before he began work on *Doc Savage*. "It's ironic—I knew almost nothing about the last two projects I worked on, and I got all my information from Mark—he introduced me to them and I see what he likes about them so much," Banks says. "I remember the Marvel black-and-white magazines from the '70s, and that's about it. This is all sort of brand new, and it adds a new excitement as I learn about it and try to shape it with a distinctive style."

Banks used character descriptions supplied by Ellis, but did have some freedom to design his cast. "The 'famous five' aren't exactly based on actors, like I had to do in *Wild, Wild West*, but I did have real people in mind for them. For instance, I used Timothy Dalton as a starting point for Ham, and Renny is like a mutated Arnold Schwarzenegger. Long Tom is sort of a Rudy Vallee, Johnny is George Orwell, and Monk is a wrestler. As far as Pat Savage goes, I used a J.C. Penney model that I've used before."

Although the penciller is a relative newcomer to the world of *Doc Savage*, both Banks and Ellis are committed to pleasing the Man of Bronze's legions of fans, of which Ellis proudly proclaims himself one.

"I really do feel the *Doc* fans will appreciate this comic," says Mark Ellis, "because it's essentially—as a *Doc Savage* fan—what I *always wanted* to see in a comic and never got. So, everything that I never got to see, I put in this comic!"

Legends of Prince Valiant

Hal Foster's hero gets a dramatic haircut for animation.

By DAN SCAPPEROTTI

Born on February 13, 1937, when it was first published by the King Feature Syndicate, Harold Foster's *Prince Valiant* is one of history's most adventurous and longest-running Sunday comic strips. Foster, who cut his professional teeth on the popular *Tarzan* strip, continued with *Prince Valiant* until—after 1,789 pages—he retired in 1971 and turned the strip over to John Cullen Murphy.

As the legend of Prince Valiant opens, the deposed King of Thule has barely escaped his former homeland with his wife, his son (Prince Valiant) and his few remaining followers. Together, they sail to the banks of Britain, where they encounter hostile forces. After beating back the first attack, the refugees are granted an island in the great marshlands to build their new home.

Prince Valiant meets a witch who predicts high adventure for the young nobleman. He will meet King Arthur and his wife Guinevere, but will find no contentment for himself. A chance encounter with Sir Lancelot persuades Valiant to become one of Arthur's "Knights of the Round Table." Eventually, he succeeds and the curse of discontent is lifted by Merlin the Magician. When not engaged in one quest or another, Valiant searches for his lady love, Aleta, "Queen of the Misty Isles," whom he later marries. Valiant's comic-strip journeys take him to all corners of the Earth, including an adventure in the New World (i.e. North America).

While many of his contemporary strips found their way into other media, Prince Valiant was even ignored by radio. That ended, however, in 1954, when director Henry Hathaway filmed *Prince Valiant* starring Robert Wagner. Now, over a half-century since his creation, the young Viking will make his television debut. A new animated series, *The Legend of Prince Valiant*, premieres on the Family Channel this fall.

Bill Miller, the president of Hearst Entertainment Distribution (owners of King Features), gave the job of adapting the strip for TV to David Corbett, who was simultaneously producing *Beetle Bailey* and *Blondie*—two other King Features-owned characters—as TV specials for CBS. Corbett admits that the comic strip has been altered. "We changed the strip's approach somewhat," he says, "to make the series a little more modern. At the same time, we certainly pay homage to the art capabilities of the great Hal Foster. His drawing ability was far and away above his contemporaries."

After a year and a half in pre-production, the series (budgeted at $350,000 per episode) went before the cameras in July 1990.

"We didn't want to do the strip as animation," Corbett continues. "Many of Hal Foster's stories went on and on and didn't provide us the opportunity to just lift [storylines from them]. But the strip is so rich with wonderful

Producer David Corbett says Prince Valiant won't face giants or dinosaurs in his quests, but he'll still find trouble.

storytelling ideas that we would refer to it and read through all of them. When we had to come up with story ideas, we frequently went to the strip and took something as the creative seed of an idea and then sat with the writers to hammer out a great story around it. The themes are so universal that everyone can relate to them."

The producers faced the dilemma of introducing cinematic nuances to Prince Valiant without alienating their core audience, i.e. strip fans. "The biggest problem we had was getting people who liked Prince Valiant for its content to relate to what we were doing," Corbett explains. "Our challenge was to produce an animated series that wasn't kidvid."

When a family audience became the producers' target, the fantasy elements were dropped. Valiant *won't* be battling giants and dinosaurs. "Nothing about this is fantastical," says Corbett. "Merlin isn't capable of turning people into chipmunks. There are no monsters in the castle. It's all very realistic. We had to bring everything up to a level where there were no easy plot solutions. So, we removed all of the (fantastic) elements that would give the writer an easy out when backed into a corner."

The original storyline has also been altered somewhat. After the exile of Valiant and his family, the young Prince has a dream of Camelot and King Arthur's noble idea that "might doesn't make right." Valiant feels that Arthur has summoned him to Camelot to become a knight of the famous Round Table. This becomes Prince Valiant's quest, and it takes him several episodes to get to the fabled court. Camelot isn't even seen until the sixth segment.

Adapting the strip to an animated format with a live action sensibility called for a major retraining of both animation writers and artists unused to prime-time fare. "These are the best animation scripts for television I've ever seen," Corbett announces. "Our biggest difficulty was getting the writing up to a point where it wasn't written down to children, but on a level everyone could enjoy.

"We had a couple of writers who said that they had always wanted to have the opportunity to write wonderful artistic material, and now that they had it, they couldn't do it and they went back to the Smurfs. They were devastated."

The character of Prince Valiant has been changed, while King Arthur, Guinevere and Merlin the Magician (although shora of his real magical powers) are similar. Val has been made younger, 16 or 17 years old, and his design has been somewhat altered. Gone is his pageboy haircut. Also missing is the beautiful Aleta. Apparently, a strong love interest would get in the way of Valiant's relationship with two new characters. One is Arn, a peasant boy the young prince befriends. In the comic, Arn is actually Prince Valiant's oldest son (by the now missing Aleta), who eventually becomes the strip's focus. Michael Horton voices Arn, who hates Vikings because they brought death and ruin to his family. He's forced to confront his own prejudices when a Viking saves his life. The scene in which that Viking dies in Arn's arms will "just knock people out," says producer Corbett.

The other new character is Rowanne, voiced by Noelle North. Introduced for the female audience, the 16-year-old is politically correct for the '90s, much like the new, improved Maid Marian from *Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves*. An expert marksswoman, Rowanne loves adventure and dreams of becoming the first female knight.

The action in *The Legend of Prince Valiant* "is played like a film," notes Corbett.

Is Prince Valiant to be just another antiseptic version of a great comic strip? "Oh, no!" says Corbett, as if he has been confronted with that fear before. "We have lots of battles, some wonderful sea battles. We've done something unprecedented. The dramatic approach to animation has never been done like this before. We've allowed Valiant to grow with the character in the 26 half hours we've completed to date. He goes from an impetuous young prince who has been exiled from his homeland to becoming a guy who later leads an army."

According to the producer, the series format itself is unlike typical animation. "We don't have this 'wrap it all up at the end' type of mentality," says Corbett. "We don't have everyone giving high fives and cheering that they killed the monster. We have murder mysteries, very pro-social issues. Every dilemma isn't laid to rest at every episode's end. You're left to wonder what happens to this guy, and four or five episodes down the road, we bring him back."

Corbett compares *Valiant*'s format to *L.A. Law*. After an entertaining hour of television, there may still be some issues unresolved. One of the earliest of these conflicts appears in the first episode, when Prince Valiant leaves home. Although the young prince has his mother's blessing, his father, King Thule, doesn't want him to go. The open rift that develops between father and son doesn't resolve itself until the seventh episode.

In another segment, Baron Duncan commits a murder and is tried in King Arthur's court. Because the evidence isn't compelling enough for a conviction, he's found not guilty. Arthur, who set up the court to uphold justice, believes Duncan guilty and wants to see him punished. Arthur must deal with the fact that the Baron is free. The murder is not resolved. A few episodes later, Duncan is brought back.

Supplementing the series' dramatic emphasis, Corbett used actors from feature films. "We've chosen acting over voice characterization when selecting our cast," he explains. "The action is played like a film. The actors interrelate on a very quiet level and, if need be, they have arguments and they yell. It's interesting and compelling to see animated characters act this way."

Although *Prince Valiant*'s continuing voice cast includes Robby Benson, Efrem Zimbalist Jr., Samantha Eggar and Tim Curry, Corbett insists, "We weren't going for star billing. It just worked out that way. Efrem Zimbalist Jr. came in with about 10 other people to read for Arthur. This wonderful distinguished silver-and grey-haired gentleman walks into the studio and reads off the part we had written for the character. I'm there with my story editor, voice director and associate producer, and when he was finished, he almost had to come over and knock on the glass to get us to close our mouths. It was just, 'That's Arthur!' He looked so regal that there was no question about it."

Corbett had originally considered Robby Benson for Arn, but gave him the Prince Valiant role to avoid the typical superhero voice heard on such shows as *Masters of the Universe*.

"Robby has a gentle, soft-spoken voice, and many people said it *wouldn't* work," Corbett admits. "But it's nice because he plays a sensitive character who has the strength when he needs it. It works very well."

Samantha Eggar was so interested in playing Arthur's Queen Guinevere that she took lessons in American dialect so that she wouldn't have such a strong British accent.

Guest stars Michael York, Roddy McDowall, JoBeth Williams, Olivia D'Abo, Tim Matheson, Marilu Henner and Patty Duke will also provide voices for *Prince Valiant*—some as one-shots, others in recurring roles. Patty Duke makes three appearances as Morgana. Michael York plays Owen, King Thule's weapons master, in two episodes. Ron Perlman of *Beauty & the Beast* is featured in a trio of shows as well.

In "The Battle of Greystone," Roddy McDowall plays King Frederick, a big bear of a man who is another monarch deposed by the rampaging King Stephen Cynan. Although Cynan is the series' main heavy, he isn't in every episode. "We don't have a Ming the Merciless trying to destroy Earth every week," explains Corbett. "We have different villains, some of whom are controlled

(continued on page 66)

There are scenes in *Prince Valiant* that will "just knock people out," Corbett says.

All Prince Valiant Photos: Courtesy The Family Channel

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Tolkin

(continued from page 32)

wrote a part for Melinda Dillon that was only a page-and-a-half long. A page-and-a-half long," he repeats in disbelief. "They sent it to her on a whim. She read it and decided to do it. Her doing that scene was one of the highest points in my life. I have one line as a photographer in that scene. She plays Steve Rogers' mother and says a tearful goodbye to him.

"Albert [Pyun, the film's director] said, 'It's not me or Menahem; it's your script that's bringing all these people in.' I think he shot the script a little too lovingly, by which I mean he let the actors linger...over...their... lines. The film came in at almost *four hours*!" Tolkin notes sadly. "To cut it down to an hour-and-a-half, they had to cut everything, and I mean *everything*. This movie doesn't make sense in its current state.

"I was really set up," says Tolkin of his reaction to the last edited version. "I was sitting there watching, thinking, 'Oh, my God, this is a masterpiece!' but it didn't keep going that way. The first 15 minutes are exactly as I saw them—gorgeously shot. *Captain America* is about two things: Resistance to the power cartels that run our lives, and the need to take personal responsibility in fighting them.

"That's missing from the movie; you won't see that in the film. Albert assembled the best cast and the best locations, extremely good production design, wonderful cinematography. So why doesn't it add up?"

Due to his work on one Marvel superhero, the writer was offered another. "They talked to me about writing *Spider-Man* many, many times," he reveals. "I turned it down on several occasions. I never thought that I could do as good a job on it as I had done with *Captain America*. I didn't want to do something that wasn't as good, and every time I looked at their drafts—they had all these drafts—each was unimaginably worse than the one before.

"Stan said that, too. I never saw in them that spark, of where I could find that thread which could make me do a really good job. I read one draft and couldn't figure out what it was about!" Tolkin is satisfied that the web-slinger now appears to be in safe hands: *Terminator* director James Cameron, who *may* do it for Carolco Pictures. "He's the right guy for it. Very interesting. He'll have a great script for it. I can't believe he got it away from 21st Century! That was their only thing; it was Menahem's only ace-in-the-hole."

Tolkin was also given a crack at a darker hero. *Predator* producer "Joel Silver wanted me to write a movie based on the British comic *Rogue Trooper*," he reveals. "I couldn't crack it in my head! I was dying to do it, but I couldn't come up with it, so I had to turn it down. I didn't think there was a movie in it.

Tolkin disliked Cap's costume because "all he can do in this outfit is run around, wave his arms and be a superhero. It gets boring after a while."

"It was a neat comic—really out there," he recalls. "A genetically-engineered perfect soldier created to fight, but he has a soul, too. He's human. The one thing Silver wanted me to do was *Rogue Trooper*, and I was like, 'Oh, please, please let me figure out a way!', but I *couldn't* see it. I could have faked that I had seen it [the angle], but I would have been stuck with writing the script. So, I had to say, 'No, thank you.' "

If that weren't enough, Tolkin also has several ambitious science-fiction projects in the works. "I did an adaptation of Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man* and it looks like—" he pauses to knock on the table for luck—"it might get made. Things look very good. I stayed pretty close to the book. It's a whodunnit, except we know who the killer is, so it's a cat-and-mouse between a cop and a killer. The cop knows who the killer is and the D.A. is on the take from the killer, because the killer's the richest man in the world.

"To gather evidence and make a case against the killer, the cop—who's telepathic—goes inside the eyewitness of the crime, the deceased's daughter who's in a catatonic state of shock. He literally goes to the landscape of her subconscious, meets her there and falls in love with her, while she remains catatonic. It's a good story," he smiles. "I wish I had thought of it. I also adapted Bester's *The Stars My Destination*, which was much more difficult."

Another project, *The Last Mardi Gras*, has "Mary [*Pet Sematary*] Lambert directing, and I love that script. It has the same producer as *Golden Years* [Laurel Entertainment]. It's about a future world where superstars are replaced with perfect replicants so they can control them and have them give the political message they want to give. They stay ageless, and the real stars have to stay out of sight. It would be like if they did it to Whitney Houston right when she became famous. At the same time, another aspect of the world is that the homeless and the criminals are kept in walled ghettos.

"I've also written and directed a short film for *American Playhouse* called *The Price of Life*. I'm doing a full-length version for 20th Century Fox. It's about a world where time is money, so you pay for things out of the time you have left to live. You pay six hours for a pack of cigarettes, and have six less hours to live. So, the poor die young and the rich live for thousands of years."

His futuristic script *Beirut*, from the *American Film* list, has also found a home. "I adapted *Beirut* and called it *Daybreak* for HBO, and I'm going to direct it. It's contingent on casting. I'm doing a polish."

Would Stephen Tolkin ever consider writing for the *Captain America* comic, as *Batman* screenwriter Sam Hamm once did? "I would love to," he readily replies, "but it's not my place." And while he's saddened about *Captain America*'s current film state, he isn't completely disheartened. "After all," he adds, "it bought my house!"

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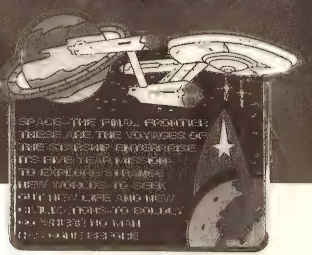

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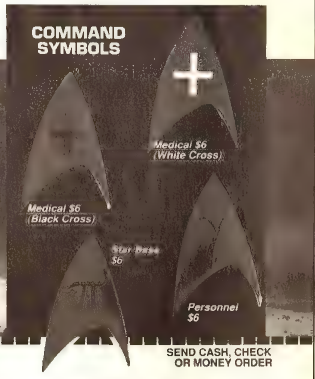

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PAST RITES

During the '60s, Arnold Drake created Deadman & the Doom Patrol. And then, he killed them.

By DREW BITTNER

In 1964, a new and bizarre group of heroes burst onto the scene. Freaks and misfits led by a mysterious, wheelchair-bound scientist, they were hated and feared by the world they fought to save.

No, not them.

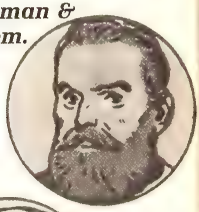
They were the Doom Patrol, the DC Comics super-team created by Arnold Drake.

"Somewhere along the line on *My Greatest Adventure*, [editor] Murray Boltinoff decided he wanted a continuing feature," Drake recalls. "It was a Friday afternoon and he wanted to see it Monday morning. I had one whole weekend to create the Doom Patrol! I had thought about doing this story with a bunch of freaks who are all assembled by one of the world's greatest scientists, who gets them to fight for justice. They've all got powers, but they don't like having them, because they hate being freaks, being different.

"Bob [Haney] was in the writers' room, and I asked him, 'You doing anything right now? Work with me on this thing and we'll split the check.' And we did. Bob and I co-wrote the first 'Doom Patrol,' and I developed the book from there."

Negative Man was Drake's first candidate for membership in this weird new group. "Larry Trainor was first.

Deadman Art: Neal Adams



Drake Caricature: Luis Dominguez/Courtesy Arnold Drake

All Deadman & Doom Patrol Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1991 DC Comics Inc.

then came Rita Farr, the stretching girl. Bob and I came up with Cliff Steele together," Drake says, adding that the group of characters included a woman because "there was a feeling that superheroes were only action characters, who just appealed to men. Adding a woman made them more of a family; it helped keep them together and balance things out, especially when you have Steele, who's always in a bad mood."

Right on the heels of the Doom Patrol came Marvel's own team of freakish outcasts, the X-Men. Although the two groups are amazingly similar, Drake quickly dismisses the notion that one company "borrowed" the other's ideas.

"It's quite a coincidence," he muses. "Both groups came out only about a month apart. The X-Men were virtually a carbon copy of the Doom Patrol, but their book came out too soon after my first story for me to say they copied my stuff. These things just happen."

Even better than creating the new super-team was having the opportunity to do almost anything he wanted with them. Perhaps this was because Drake had more creative freedom working with Murray Boltinoff than he might have had with other editors at DC, Marvel or competing companies.

"Some guys didn't like working with Boltinoff very much, for whatever reason, but I really did," Drake says. "I liked dealing with him because he was in the habit of giving writers plenty of freedom. He might call you in and ask, 'So, what are these guys doing?' You would tell him and that was it. [DC editors] Mort Weisinger and Jack Schiff dictated plots to writers, which I never liked. I wanted to sit down, warm up the typewriter and go, which wasn't how those two did things.

"Stan Lee was to Marvel what Weisinger was to DC," Drake adds. "At Marvel, the writers waited for Stan to have the idea; he would write the first few issues of a new book and then turn it over to somebody else. I couldn't have invented the Doom Patrol or anything else at Marvel, because I don't think Stan had taken to the idea of treating *other* writers as equals."

A few years after creating the Doom Patrol, Drake was offered a shot at devising another ongoing character for an anthology title under identical deadline pressures. What he came up with threw his editor for a loop, and almost wasn't published. This idea wasn't just offbeat; it was downright bizarre.

"Deadman began pretty much the same way the Doom Patrol did," Drake says. "It was a Thursday or Friday and [editor] Jack Miller came in to tell me he had problems with *Strange Adventures*.

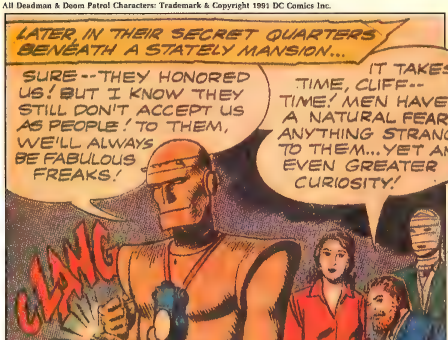
" 'It needs an identity, something readers can latch onto,' he told me. He wanted it Monday morning, too. I came up with the idea over the weekend, took it to Jack and told him, 'You're going to have a fit, but I want to call it Deadman.' He told me we would never get it past the Comics Code. I went back and wrote it all up, even drew Boston Brand in his skeletal costume, and explained why I thought the name fit. Jack looked at it and gave in. He took it to the Code people and fought to get it approved. It was.

"Carmine Infantino did the first Deadman story. He showed me his artwork for it and asked what I thought. It was beautiful, some of his best stuff yet, but I said he should bust up Brand's nose. Brand was a lifelong circus performer, roustabout, athlete and so on—he *isn't* going to come out looking like Clark Gable! Carmine decided I had a point and redrew the nose," Drake says.

However, the writer's move to England at the time caused problems for the newly-created hero.

"It was hard to do 'Deadman' because I needed to bounce it off people. You always need that, never more than when you're trying to break new ground," he says. "I had [controversial] stories I wanted to tell. [Those stories] never came about because I wasn't here to fight for them."

Other writers filled in on the Deadman feature while Drake started running into problems with DC's top management. As *The Doom Patrol*'s sales decreased, the time seemed right to end their adventures. Ironically, the Patrol and Drake's careers at DC ended almost simultaneously.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SURE--THEY HONORED US! BUT I KNOW THEY STILL DON'T ACCEPT US AS PEOPLE! TO THEM, WE'LL ALWAYS BE FABULOUS FREAKS!
IT TAKES TIME, CLIFF--TIME! MEN HAVE A NATURAL FEAR OF ANYTHING STRANGE TO THEM...YET AN EVEN GREATER CURIOSITY!
CLANG

Most Doom Patrol Art: Bruno Premiani

In one weekend, Arnold Drake created the Doom Patrol, a "group of freaks" who hated "being freaks, being different."

THE WORLD'S STRANGEST HEROES!
DOOM PATROL
THIS IS THE ULTIMATE MISSION FOR WHICH I CREATED YOU--THE DESTRUCTION OF THE DOOM PATROL! SUMMON THE OTHERS!
YES, MASTER, I WILL OBEY!

Doom Patrol #86, Copyright 1964 National Periodical Publications, Inc.

The popularity of Drake's Doom Patrol resulted in their taking over *My Greatest Adventure*, where they first appeared.

"The book itself wasn't doing so well, so we were going to let the readers write in and vote to see if the characters were going to survive. I liked the idea of killing them off," he admits. "For one thing, it hadn't been done before. I wanted to say to kids that even in comics, people can die, because we've been teaching kids that if you're the right kind of guy, like a Rambo, you *won't* die. That's a bad message to give kids.

"Anyway, the original last panel [of *Doom Patrol*] shows the two of us at the drawing board: Bruno says, 'Arnold, are you really going to kill them?' and I say, 'It's up to the readers, Bruno.' But I had had problems with [DC publishing exec] Irwin Donenfeld by then and I had quit, so they put Murray Boltinoff into the panel instead of me."

Drake's problems involved money and the prospect of a new supervisory position at DC, working with then-new publisher, Carmine Infantino.

"Carmine's a terrific artist, but he could have used some help getting stories to fit together," the writer comments. "Of course, I nominated myself for this. Donenfeld said he wanted six months to think it over. At the same time, I had requested a raise, which he agreed to. When the raise didn't come through, I dropped everything and walked out."

While creating Deadman, Drake had to explain to editor Jack Miller and the Comics Code Authority why the name fit.

Drake has occasionally followed Deadman's exploits since then and admits to some disappointment over how his ghostly acrobat degenerated into "just another guy with powers."

"They didn't know what to do with him," Drake complains. "They could have investigated the 'other world,' which is what I had had in mind all along. Eastern mysticism made him Deadman for a reason; there were keys in my stuff that they ignored. 'Deadman' was meant to be a means of exploring comparative religion, to see what religions there are the world which aren't Christian or Jewish."

In Drake's version of the afterlife, with competing political factions running things, the good guys wouldn't always win. Boston Brand would have been as much a Marco Polo of the next world as a problem-solving supernatural being. However, with other writers creating their own agendas for Deadman, it never came to pass.

"Part of it is my own fault," Drake admits. "I was too impatient and walked away instead of sitting down to explain things over and over again when a publisher or editor didn't understand it the first time. When I was 24 or 25, I had an idea for a paperback-sized comic book, a *Reader's Digest*-size thing done in black and white. I called them 'picture novels.' I sold the owner of St. Johns Publishing on the idea; he hired me to write one. Another guy wrote a second one. So, we had two of these things and he put them

Drake told artist Carmine Infantino that the circus-performer-turned-Deadman shouldn't "look like Clark Gable."

out. I urged him to publish at least four, if not eight, because two books would get swallowed up next to everything else on the market. And sure enough, they vanished and he walked out on the idea. If I had pushed a little more and it had taken off, a popular form of comics might have been created back then instead of just recently."

Drake's knack for avant-garde comics writing surfaced in his first attempt at breaking into the field, when he put together a newspaper strip with Bob Kane entitled *Nick O'Tyme*.

"It was a funny private eye strip that was ahead of its time," Drake says. "We did maybe 20 or 30 panels and Bob took it to Post Hall Syndicate, and they didn't get excited about it. Bob stuck it on the shelf and wanted to forget about it, so I guess that one rejection permanently killed *Nick O'Tyme*. But by then, I had a real appetite to write comics."

Drake got a job working for National, which later became DC, doing stories for *House of Suspense*, *House of Mystery* and *My Greatest Adventure*.

"I think my first thing for DC was 'Batman Meets Jules Verne,' " Drake says. "There's this threat to the world and Jules Verne's notebooks indicate he knew something about this same threat years and years ago. So, Batman and Robin go back through time, find Verne and get him to help fight this danger, which he does. I ended the story by having Verne taken on a tour of the world, to be shown the modern-day versions of things he wrote about in his books.

"After that was 'The Second Death of Abraham Lincoln.' I had read a bunch of stories, thousands of them, where the character wakes up and says, 'Oh, thank God! It was just a nightmare!' I wanted to do a story where the nightmare was waking up, about an actor who finds himself reliving Lincoln's assassination, except that he hasn't really died. He has had a nervous breakdown in the middle of a pageant re-creating the murder."

However, things weren't going very smoothly at DC for Drake, since he found it difficult to work with DC's then Editor-in-Chief, Mort Weisinger.

"I *couldn't* work with Weisinger," Drake recalls. "I saw him berating writers and artists, generally treating people like dirt. And, right then, you either worked for Mort or you didn't work at all. I wouldn't put up with that and I left. I only came back to DC when they broke up the editorial power between Weisinger, Jack Schiff and Murray Boltinoff. I had been around the office after I left, working with Jack on some TV projects, so it was pretty easy to come back, actually, and work for Jack.

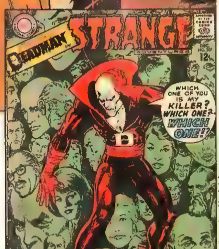
"And then, I did *House of Mystery*, *House of Secrets*. I did 'Space Ranger,' too, but I absolutely *hated* that one. *Everybody* hated it, but Jack thought the little alien was cute and funny, so, as low man on the totem pole, it became my job to write 'Space Ranger.' I

Larry Trainor (a.k.a. Negative Man) was the first hero Drake drafted into the Doom Patrol.

Selected Comics; Courtesy The Greatberger Collection

THE DOOM PATROL --THE WORLD'S STRANGEST HEROES--IN ANOTHER NEW DOUBLE-LENGTH THRILLER!
GREATEST ADVENTURE
CLIFF, GET AWAY BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
NO, I'VE GOT TO DESTROY THIS THERMAL UNIT BEFORE IT BURNS EARTH TO A CRISP...
...EVEN IF I'M DESTROYED WITH IT!
Greatest Adventure #82 Art Copyright 1963 National Periodical Publications, Inc.

When *Doom Patrol* sales dropped, "I liked the idea of killing them off," the writer recalls.



Drake is disappointed that Deadman solves Earth-based mysteries rather than investigate the "other world."

did *Batman* for a while and worked with Bob Kane again, then went to *My Greatest Adventure*, which led to the Doom Patrol."

Drake's artistic freedom was well matched by the lavish artwork of Bruno Premiani, who created the visual look of the Patrol and handled art chores for most of the feature's run.

"Bruno was a real artist. At first, I think his work put off people a little, because it was sophisticated. It had a very classy, European look to it; for example, Rita Farr was originally an attractive Italian lady," Drake reveals. "Bruno's action scenes could be a little stiff, but he was a fabulous draftsman and his art was extremely detailed. His secret was that he liked to work, and not every artist does. With Bruno, it really showed. I enjoyed working with him; we had a great partnership."

Premiani's infrequent absences from the pages of *Doom Patrol* were covered by the late Bob Brown, with whom Drake had done some *Challengers of the Unknown* stories. "Bob was a very gifted man," Drake says. "He was a pilot in World War II, a professional jazz pianist and a great illustrator."

Although the writer admits he isn't familiar with the modern comics industry, the things he has seen lately have left him "cold."

"I can't think of a word that fits better than 'cold,' " Drake observes. "However, being that I'm not conversant with the new stuff, it isn't fair for me to be judgmental."

Far from being inactive since leaving the comics field, Drake has continued writing as public relations director of Resources for Midlife and Older Women, a therapeutic organization devoted to an important, often-overlooked minority. He also directs Veterans Living Theater, an organization which fights drug abuse by dramatizing the lives of recovering drug-addicted veterans.

Drake hasn't ruled out writing for comics again, but he notes that one consideration comes before all others.

"Sammy Cahn, the composer, was asked what came first, the words or the music," Drake says, "and he answered, 'The check comes first.' I got out of comics because, back then, there wasn't enough money in it. It would have to be worth my time from a financial perspective, especially since I would have to take time off and immerse myself in what's happening in the field. I haven't kept as close touch as I once did. Growing up, I was aware of comics but wasn't really a reader. Still, it was part of my life. Just like a piano player coming back after 10 years off needs a few weeks to practice and relearn the old skills, I would need some time to relearn comics.

"Luis [Dominguez, artist] calls me up and wants to know when we're going to work together again. I would love to work with him on something, but I can't see doing it just for fun."

Although his contributions to comics are almost a generation past, Arnold Drake hasn't been forgotten by the fans.

"When I make a rare visit to a comics convention or to a comics shop, I sometimes run into people who know my work on 'Deadman,' but almost always, people remember the old Doom Patrol. I like that. It was special, it was different, and I enjoyed it a lot."

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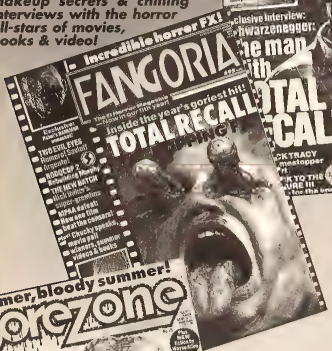

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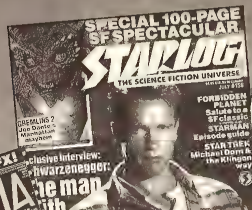

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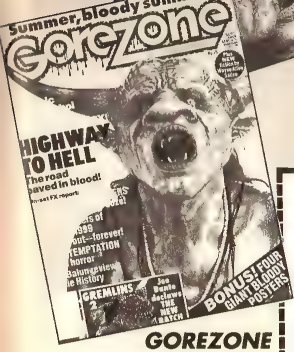

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Valiant

(continued from page 56)

by King Cynan. Frederick Castle was one of the first kingdoms to come under King Cynan's rule and one of the first that Prince Valiant had to liberate before going on to get his own homeland back."

The episodes, especially those involving battles, were designed to be very colorful and large in scale. The first program opens with a nine-and-a-half-minute battle scene. "There's an incredible build," says Corbett. "The army on the hill getting ready to go to war. The people inside the castle getting ready to defend their lives. One of the places I put a lot of emphasis is in backgrounds. We used Renaissance paintings and Winslow Homer-type watercolors as references to get wonderful dramatic points of light. We don't use many primary colors. We use the kind of golden brown hues of Renaissance art. We don't over-saturate the screen with color. It's very cinematic that way and the backgrounds are lavishly painted. They are beautiful."

With European financial and distribution deals and the Sei Young Company doing the animation in Korea, *The Legend of Prince Valiant* is an international project. Corbett, however, controlled the creative aspects, setting the tone and look of the series from his Los Angeles offices. California was the center of creative involvement from script and storyboards to voice casting and the design and building of the models and props.

"I had the look of the series and all the colors to be used in the series preordained here," says Corbett. "On each episode, we'll do about 10 full layouts. Five or six of them will be full production backgrounds so they'll know on important backgrounds, *how* we want this particular scene to look or the show to feel. We then send them to France, where they handle many of the layouts. We'll be doing much of our post-production in France as well."

Although the stilted dialogue of the Foster strip has been replaced with a more accessible form, the hip jargon frequently found in TV cartoons has been avoided. "Nobody says 'dude!' " exclaims David Corbett. "It's not modernspeak. We *do* pay a certain homage to the time period. We've got dialects and we've got Brits on the series like Roddy McDowall and Roger Rees. Prince Valiant talks a little more formally and his friend Arn, a peasant, talks differently because he's a little more humble. *Prince Valiant* has its own voice and it is *not* Ninja Turtle!"

Turtles

(continued from page 28)

way of knowing, except I have all the stories in my head. But MWS produced all of them."

Wolf is surprisingly non-defensive when responding to the oft-cited criticism that *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is just another "toy-driven" show. "I know what the critics are talking about as far as toy-driven shows—we've done commercials, and we were involved in one of the most blatant forms of commercialization with the *Strawberry Shortcake* specials.

"Although we were given the series assignment for *Turtles* [by an ad agency that represents Playmates Toys], we never had pressure from them to do a toy-driven show. I said we wouldn't do a show like that, where every time you turn around a new toy is being promoted. We set out to do a piece of entertainment, and today, that's still our credo.

"Yeah, the Turtles have a blimp, and a toy was made out of it, but ours is not a toy-driven show. I don't think anyone comes away from our show and says, 'I must buy a toy,' " Wolf adds with apparent lack of irony.

And what changes has the Turtles' new season brought? None, claims Wolf, who believes that a successful formula shouldn't be tampered with. "We're holding on to the principle that if it works, don't fix it. We've just got to keep getting more inventive with the stories and keep the show, above all, funny and entertaining. All I can tell you is, Raphael will *not* become a tap dancer."

With so many shows in the can, one might think the writers would be running out of story ideas by now. But Wolf insists that it's all in the premise. "There's a wealth of ideas to glean from; it isn't just a one-beat concept—otherwise, we would have never gotten 47 more shows off the ground [after the initial 13]. In one of the early shows, we had the Turtles on a 'trash TV' kind of show, like Morton Downey Jr. Obviously, we wouldn't pick a subject like that today, but it was fun at the time. The key is to keep the shows as contemporary as possible. There's no reason the series has to end. There are certainly many stories that *haven't* been told yet."

Judging by his comments, Wolf doesn't seem in the least worried that Turtlemania might have peaked, though he says the phenomenon is bound to slow at some point. "I would be crazy to say [affects an obnoxious producer-type voice], 'They'll never peak!' Let's just say I won't be shocked when it happens. The *Turtles* may peak, but I don't think they're going to go away, like other shows. They'll be around, on one level or another, for a long, long time. And they'll stay in syndication for a long time. It's the same with Disney: *DuckTales* went to number one, then we got the *Turtles* above them; *Rescue Rangers* hit number one and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* beat *them* out. The Turtles are number one in network and in syndication, according to the [most recent ratings]. So I don't have anything to feel bad about."

In 1989, MWS opened MW/Dublin, a facility created to, among other things, assist the company with its mass-produced series workload. Headed by Jimmy Murakami, who now resides in Ireland, MW/Dublin can take a show "from top to bottom," according to Wolf, from storyboard to animation.

MW/Dublin has already delivered episodes of the *Turtles*, as well as two episodes of MWS's new animated strip for fall, *James Bond Jr.*, a gadget-filled spy show revolving around 007's nephew (not his son, as one might expect). Wolf is "very excited" that this "hot title" immediately "sold out across the country. There's a franchise in there that we can't afford to let down." A second half-hour MWS product, *Toxic Crusaders*, based on the Troma *Toxic Avenger* horror films, is beginning its second season.

Wolf gratefully acknowledges the Turtles for putting his company on the map. "We've gone from being a boutique operation specializing in specials and commercials to being a heavyweight company that's serious about serious work. It allows us to stay a little more independent than we were before, and it has changed my life to a degree. But, no, I haven't got a Rolls-Royce."

Thirty years' experience in the animation industry notwithstanding, not even Fred Wolf was able to foresee the long-range success his company would enjoy as a result of taking this quartet of heroes in a half-shell into the domain of animation.

"No one could have predicted it," he explains. "But we were very, very confident upon seeing the first animation coming back. From that point on, we knew we were making the right move. I guess it's like a stage performer: You know within the first two beats if you're clicking, and the rest becomes easy. When the applause comes at the end, you've had the whole performance to expect it."

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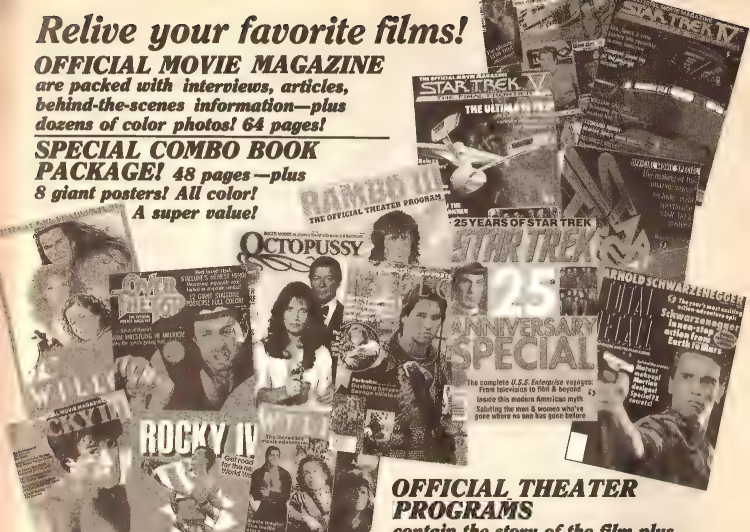
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All projects are live-action unless specified. Those marked by an asterisk (*) are new/updated since last listing. **Not everything listed will ultimately ever be made.** Abbreviations: S=script; D=director; P=producer; AN. animated; LA=live-action; Syn=syndicated: HB=Hanna-Barbera; WB=Warner Bros.; MWS=Murakami Wolf Swenson; RB=Rankin-Bass, WD=Disney; PP=Paramount, U/ Universal; Col=Columbia; FF=Funnybook Films **Attn. all pros:** Info to be added to this list is cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 9/6/91)

The Crow looks for vengeance as a film project.

* **The Addams Family.** Film. D: Barry Sonnenfeld. S: C. Thompson. L. Wilson. (see article) PP. November. AN series. ABC. HB. Fall '92.

The Airtight Garage. AN. S: Randy Lofficier.

Aladdin. AN film. WD. '92.

Alias. Film. U. S: David S. Goyer. P: P. Lenkov. S. Daniel.

Alley Oop. Film. Col.

The American. Film. P: Joel Silver. S: Mark Verheiden.

American Flagg! Film.

An American Tail: Fievel Goes West. AN film. U. Nov.

Ant-Man. Film.

Archie. LA Film. S: N. & D. Ephron. D: J. Schumacher. DIC.

Baby Huey. AN short. U. S: Bill Kopp.

Barbarella. TV. Nelvana.

Barbie. Film Abrams/ Gentile Ent. & Mattel.

* **Batman.** Sequel. *Batman Returns*. S: Dan Waters. D: Tim Burton. Cast: Michael Keaton, Danny DeVito, Michelle Pfeiffer, Chris Walken. WB. Summer '92. Now shooting. AN series, '92 on FBC.

* **Battletoads.** TV pilot.

* **Beauty & the Beast.** AN film. WD. Nov. (see article).

Beetle Bailey. Film.

* **Beetlejuice.** AN series. ABC. video & FBC. Film sequel. *Beetlejuice in Love*.

Blackhawk. Film. Amblin. S: Dan Avkroyd.

Blackman. Film.

Blade. Film. S: Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin

Blinky Bill. Australian AN film. P: Yoram Gross. '92.

Blondie. Film musical. WD S: Alfred Uhry. P: Francine LeFrak, Dean Young.

James Bond. Syn AN series. *Adventures of James Bond jr.* MWS. Fall '91.

Betty Boop. Film. D: R. Fleischer.

Bonkers D. Bobcat. Syn AN series. WD. '92.

* **Boogiemanland.** AN. Nelvana. FBC.

Bucky O'Hare. Syn AN.

Bugs Bunny. *Termite Terrace*. LA/AN film. D: Joe Dante. Based on Chuck Jones' autobiography *Chuck Amuck*.

Bullwinkle. *Boris & Natasha* film. Release delayed.

Capitol Critters. AN series. P: S. Bochco/HB. ABC. '92.

Captain America. Film.

Captain Planet. AN series.

Casper. Film. Amblin.

* **Cats.** AN. Amblin. Project shelved for the time being.

* **Charlie Chan.** Film, S/D: David Mamet. P: G. Kirkwood, J. Hyde.

* **Chester Cheetah.** AN. Nelvana. FBC.

Chicken Man. AN spoof series. Calico.

City of Darkness. Film. S: Patrick Cirillo & Joe Gayton. P: M. Douglas, R. Bieber. Col.

* **Cobalt 60.** AN Film.

Conan. Film sequel. S: Charles Edward Pogue.

* **Concrete.** Film. S: Caroline Thompson, Larry Wilson (also D). P: Tim Burton.

Cool World. AN/LA film PP. D: Ralph Bakshi. '92.

* **The Crow.** Film. S: John Shirley. D: Alex Proyas. P: Ed Pressman.

Danger Squad. Film. P/D: Leo Fong. W/D: P.R. Cable

Darkwing Duck. AN Syn & ABC series.

Deathlok. Film.

Defenders of Dynatron City. AN half-hour. LucasArts.

Dennis the Menace. Film. P: John Hughes. WB.

Dinosaurs for Hire. Film. S: Richard Finney & James Bonny. Fox. FX. Henson C Shop.

Dr. Strange. Film. Zoetrope D: Alex Cox. P: F. Coppola.

Dreamwalker. CBS TV film.

Dudley Do-Right. Film. PP.

Elfquest. Film/TV. Abby Lou Prod. Freedom Distrib.

Evangeline. Film. FF.

Family Dog. AN series. CBS. P: Spielberg, Burton, Klein. '92. Amblin/Nelvana.

Far Side. AN TV.

Fearless Fosdick. LA Nelvana.

Fish Police. AN series. HB. CBS. Mid-season. S: J. Romano.

Fist of the North Star. English language version AN film out October. Streamline.

The Flintstones. Film. Fred: John Goodman. D: Richard Donner. U/Amblin. AN TV film. S: J. Romano.

Garfield. AN series.

* **Ghost Rider.** Film "Dead."

G.I. Joe. Film. S: Anthony & John Gentile. WB.

Goofy. Syn AN series *Goof Troop*. WD. Bows '93.

The Green Arrow. TV.

The Green Hornet. Film. S: D. Mancini. P: D. Kirschner. U.

Grimjack. Film.

Gumby. Film.

Hopalong Cassidy. Film. S: G. Popper. J. Rosenthal. Alligator Prods.

* **Human Target.** Series. ABC. Cast: R. Springfield, C. Clemons. P: D. Bilson, P. De Meo, L. Lyttle. '92.

Inspector Gadget. LA TV series. DIC. Family Channel.

Iron Man. Film. D: Stuart Gordon. U.

The Jetsons. LA film. U.

Jo Jo. Film. P: Lee Caplin. S: Mike Chapman.

Jonny Quest. Film. U.

Judge Dredd. Film. Fox. S: H. Chaykin & J. Moore. P: C. Lippincott. For '93.

Kaanga. Film. S: (D) Geoff Edwards. S. Bernard. P: L. Caplin, B. Edwards, T. Adams.

Li'l Abner. TV P: Max & Micheline Keller.

Little Mermaid. AN prequel TV series. For '92. WD

Little Nemo. AN film. TMS Ent./Hemdale. June '92 release.

Lone Wolf & Cub. Film. D: John Brunno. P: Ed Pressman. S: Bill Wisher.

Lucky Luke. TV series. Terence Hill. star. Silvio Berlusconi Comm.

Mai the Psychic Girl. Film. D: Tim Burton. S: L. Wilson, C. Thompson. P: Burton, Wilson, Denise Di Novi, Walter Hill. Carolco. "Movie musical."

Mandrake. Film.

The Mask. Film New Line.

Mr. A. Video.

Mr. Magoo. Film. P: S. Tisch. AN/LA.

Mr. X. Film. P: Jim Cash & Jack Epps Jr.

* **Monster in My Pocket.** AN special. HB. ABC. S: Glenn Leopold.

Mother Goose & Grimm. AN series. CBS. Film Roman. Lee Mendelson Prod. Fall '91.

Nancy. Film. P: P. Muller.

Negative Man. Bob Kane hero. LA series. Nelvana.

Neil the Horse. AN/LA.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Film. S: Greg Pruss.

Joe Palooka. Musical.

Paparazzi Samurai. AN TV series. P: DIC. Abrams/Gentile.

The Phantom. Film. P: B. Sherlock, P. Siqouist. J. Torv.

R. Price. S: Ken Shadie. Lee Falk, con. D: Simon Wincer.

Pico & Columbus. AN film. Bavaria Film.

Pirates of Dark Water. AN series. ABC. HB. Airing.

Power Pack. TV pilot. S: Jason Brett. New World & Paragon Ent.

Plastic Man. Film. WB/Amblin.

* **Prince Valiant.** AN series. Family Channel. (see article)

The Prowler. Film. FF.

The Punisher. Sequel.

Radio Boy. AN. RB.

Reid Fleming. Film. S: creator David Boswell. P: M. Weisman, J. Loeb II.

Richie Rich. Film. P: J. Silver, J. Davis. S: Neil Tolkin.

RoboCop 3. S: Frank Miller & Fred Dekker (D). For '92.

Roger Rabbit. Prequel film. *Who Discovered Roger Rabbit*. D: Rob Minkoff. WD. New short "Hare in My Soup."

Rogue Trooper. Film.

The Saint. Film. S: Terry Hayes. D: Renny Harlin. P: Robert Evans. PP.

Scooby Doo. Film. WB.

Secret Agent X-9. AN film.

Sgt. Preston. TV revival.

Sgt. Rock. Film. P: Joel Silver, Bob Zemeckis. WB.

The Shadow. Film. S: David Koepp. P: Martin Bregman. U.

The She-Hulk. Film. S/D: Larry Cohen. B. Nielsen.

The Silver Surfer. Film.

The Simpsons. AN. FBC.

Speed Racer. Film. S: Peter Lenkov. P: J. Silver. WB.

Spider-Man. Stage musical. S & lyrics: B. Harman. Music: K. Herrmann. EXP: Stan Lee. D: J. Nash, J. Calamari.

Starwatcher. AN film. P: Alain Guiot/Videosystem. S: Moebius (D) & J. Fryzman.

Sub-Mariner. Film.

* **Superboy.** Syn TV. 100 episodes finished. Out of production.

Super-Dave. AN version of LA series. DIC.

Superman. *Superman: The New Movie*. S: Mark Jones & Cary Bates. To lense FL.

Super Mario Bros. LA film. S: Barry Morrow. W/ Danny DeVito.

Swamp Thing. TV. USA.

Tales from the Crypt. HBO.

Tarzan. Syn TV series. T: Wolf Larson. Airing.

* **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** AN series. CBS & Syn. (see article)

Terry & the Pirates. Film. S: J. Feiffer. P: G. Kirkwood, J. Hyde. EXP: S. Weston.

Thor. Film. Stonebridge.

Time Beavers. AN TV series. Kushner-Locke.

Tintin. AN series. Nelvana. Ellipse. HBO fall '91.

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The English language version of *Fist of the North Star* hits limited theatrical release this month.

* **Tom & Jerry.** AN film. P/D: Phil Roman. Summer '92.

Trouble with Girls. Film. Fox & FF. S: W. Jacobs, G. Jones. P: M. Pepler, N. Tabachnick.

Ultraman. 13 new half-hour TV episodes. Shot in English.

Valentina. TV series. Dementra Hampton. Reteitalia.

Vampirella. Film. S/D: Jim Wynorski.

V for Vendetta. Film. WB. S: Hilary Henkin.

WARP. Film. S/P: Mark Victor & Michael Grais.

Watchmen. Film. P: J. Silver. D: T. Gilliam.

We're Back. AN film. Amblin London/U. For '92.

Why I Hate Saturn. TV.

* **Wild Cards.** Film. Disney.

Wizard of Id. Film. Cinergi.

Wolverine. Film.

The X-Men. Film. Carolco. P: Jim Cameron. AN 5-ep mini-series. FBC. Marvel P.

Yogi Bear. *Yo! Yogi.* AN TV series. HB. NBC. Airing.

Zen. Film. AN series.

Zorro. Film. D: Steven Spielberg. S: Nancy Larson. Tri-Star. TV series. Family Chan.

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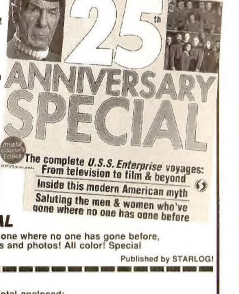
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REALISTIC MASKS FROM T2™

These super-realistic masks show the four phases "The Terminator" goes through in TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY, as his human appearance—his "skin!"—is torn away, revealing the endoskeleton underneath!

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A full over-the-head mask of as "The Terminator," as portrayed by Arnold Schwarzenegger, complete with full-length neck and a crew cut of sculptured hair.

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A full over-the-head mask of "The Terminator," as portrayed by Arnold Schwarzenegger, complete with full-length neck and a crew cut of sculptured hair. But there are tears in the skin, revealing the silver endoskeleton underneath!

PHASE 3 MASK
A full over-the-head mask of "The Terminator," as portrayed by Arnold Schwarzenegger, complete with full-length neck and a crew cut of sculptured hair. But this mask shows half of Schwarzenegger's face and half of the endoskeleton!

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TERMINATOR 2 JUDGMENT DAY MASKS —$49.99 + postage

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Please indicate quantity of masks being ordered and add $6 ($12 Foreign) to cover postage and handling. Canadian residents add 10% sales tax.

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MAGNIFICENT COLLECTIBLES!

Framed Gold-Plated Records

Actual records from the soundtracks of the original *STAR TREK* TV series and *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION* have been plated in 24kt gold and framed with mint-condition album covers and numbered plaques in quality 18" x 24" black metal frames.

The framed 24kt gold-plated records are released in a Limited Edition of only 5,000. $239 each.

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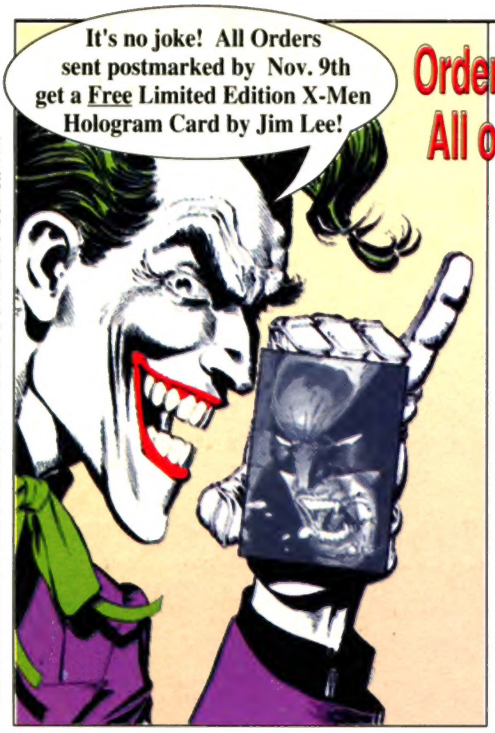

Robin & The Joker © & TM DC Comics, 1991. Wolverine © & TM Marvel Comics, 1991.

Order by Nov. 9th & Get a Free X-Men Hologram Card!
All orders postmarked by Dec. 14th are Guaranteed!

ROBIN II: The Joker's Wild!

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Punish 60 (Luke Cage)	1.25/ **.99**
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Wolverine 51	1.75/**1.50**
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100 Backing Boards	$6.95
100 Plastic Bags	$4.95

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New 180 card series by Impel! Contains 36 packs (432 cards) plus 1-5 hologram cards!	
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All new 64 page story by Simon Bisley! The Easter Bunny hires Lobo to kill Santa!!!	
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Marvel 1991 Yearbook	4.00/**3.50**
This great 48 pg magazine is a must have for all Marvel fans! Cover by Art Adams!	
Punisher Blood of Moors	$17/**$12.95**
All new 64 page hardcover! Stunning art!	
X-Men Cards (Box)	$48/**29.95**
This all new 90 card series by Jim Lee is hot! Stunning art! 48 packs (480 cards) per box!	

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Batman: Killing Joke	$5/**3.95**
Best of Marvel Trade	$13/**9.95**
Hulk Ground Zero	$13/**9.95**
Marv Masterworks 1-18	$35/**$30**
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Wolv: Rahne of Terra	$5/**3.95**
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Wolverine vs. Spidey	$5/**3.95**
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X-Men Savage Lands	$10/**7.95**
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Hellraiser Posterbook	4.95/**3.95**
Marvel Superheroes	5.95/**4.95**
Spiderman (McFarl)	5.95/**4.95**
Wolv vs. Hulk (McFarl)	5.95/**4.95**
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BATMAN GRAB BAG **$4.95**
(A $25 value! 10 different items!)
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(50 different, valuable comics!)

Wolverine, Ghost Rider & The Punisher ™ & © Marvel Entertainment, 1991

The all new Ghost Rider, Punisher, & Wolverine deluxe will be red-hot! This awesome cover is also available as a poster!

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Aliens Tribes HC	$25/**19.95**
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Violent & gory new 96 pg Hc!	
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The sequel to Gotham by Gaslight!	
Best of Star Trek	$20/**16.95**
Huge 240 page collection!	
Best of What If	$13/ **9.95**
Art by Byrne, Miller & more! 192 pgs!	
Excalibur vs. Galactus	$5/ **3.95**
New 48 pg story! Art by Ron Lim!	
History of Marvel HC	$45/**34.95**
huge 288 pg hardcover features entire 50 year history! 700+ photos!	
Legion Archives 1 HC	$40/**29.95**
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Marvel vs. DC Trade	$18/**14.95**
Huge 320 pg includes Superman vs Spidey, Batman vs Hulk & more!	
Next Men GN (Byrne)	$10/**7.95**
All new mutant team by Byrne!	
Punisher: Bloodlines	$6/**4.95**
Action-packed 48 pg thriller!	
Punisher: Eye for an Eye	$10/**7.95**
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Silv Surfer Homecoming	$13/**9.95**
All new 64-pages by Jim Starlin!	
Star Trek: Debt Honor	$25/**$20**
All new HC by Chris Claremont!	

GIFT ITEMS

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Cable on Black T-Shirt	$14/**$12**
Comic Price Guide 91	$6/**4.95**
DC Cards I (Pack)	$1/ **.79**
Marvel Investor Kit	$20/**$15**
Contains price guide, storage box, 5 valuable comics & more!	
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Marvel Universe Binder	$8/**6.95**
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Punisher Portfolio	$16/**$12**
Wolverine Nintendo	$55/**$49**
X-Men Ltd Prints (6)	$15/**$12**
Contains six 6x9 prints by Jim Lee!	
X-Men T-Shirt (Jim Lee)	$14/**$12**
X-Men 1992 Calendar	$8/**6.95**

ENTERTAINMENT THIS MONTH

Box 470-E26C
Gainesville, VA 22065
(703)-349-1366

1. All orders sent by Nov 9th get a Free limited edition X-Men Hologram Card! This will be sent in late November!
2. All orders sent (postmarked) by Dec.14th are guaranteed. All orders ship on Jan. 3rd! (Allow 2-3 weeks for shipping.)
3. All items are guaranteed in like new, Mint-Nm, condition!
4. Prices are per each item! (ex. Robin II 1-4 are 79¢ each.)
5. The minimum order is $15.
6. U.S. add $3.95 for shipping. Canada $4.95, Foreign $7.95.
7. Add extra $1 for insurance.
8. Enclose check or money order. Payment in U.S. funds.
9. Phone or fax credit card orders. Call 9-6 pm Mon-Fri. (Fax # 703-347-2156)
10. Orders received after Dec. 14th will be filled as best as we can & will ship in 4-6 weeks.

We reserve the right to limit orders. Ad expires 1/31/92. Send $1 for our new catalog after then! **Thanks!**

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